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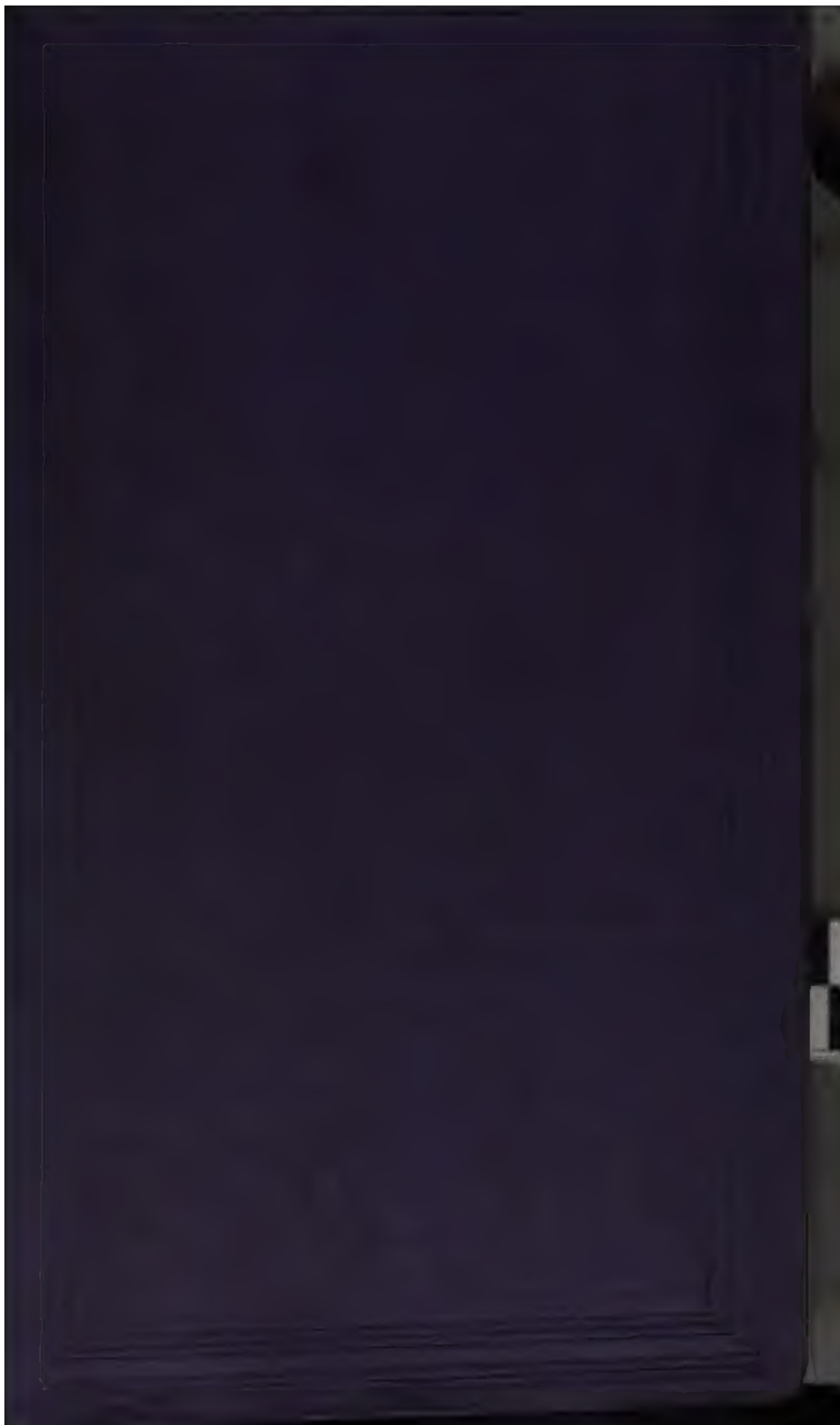
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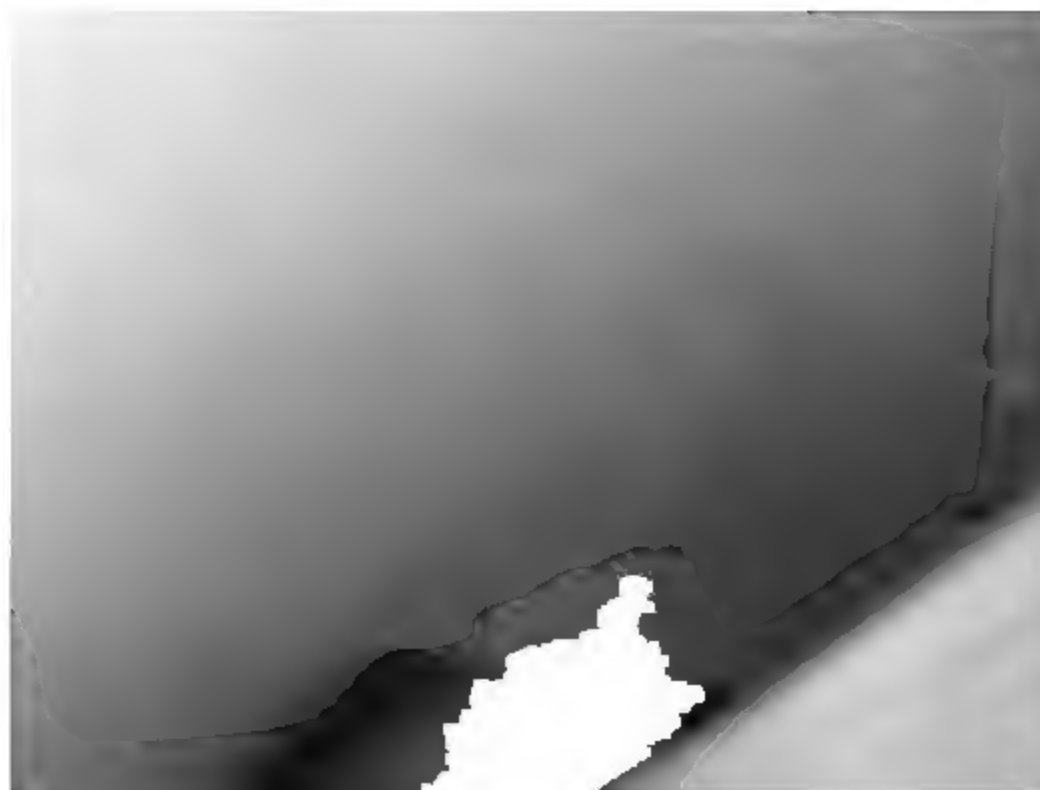
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THE HISTORY
OF THE
RELIGION OF ANCIENT BRITAIN.

THE HISTORY
OF THE
RELIGION OF ANCIENT BRITAIN:
OR,
A SUCCINCT ACCOUNT
OF
THE SEVERAL RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS
WHICH HAVE OBTAINED IN THIS ISLAND FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES
TO THE NORMAN CONQUEST.

INCLUDING
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EARLY PROGRESS OF ERROR IN
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH,
THE INTRODUCTION OF THE GOSPEL INTO BRITAIN,
AND THE STATE OF RELIGION IN ENGLAND TILL POPEERY HAD
GAINED THE ASCENDANCY.

BY GEORGE SMITH, LL.D., F.A.S.,
MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY, AND OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY
OF LITERATURE.

THIRD EDITION.

REVISED AND EDITED BY THE AUTHOR'S ELDEST SON,
W. BICKFORD SMITH.

LONDON:
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GREEN.

1865.

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PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

IN the autumn of last year my father was gratified at hearing from his publishers, that another edition of this book was required to meet the demands of the public. This information reached him at a time when he could not possibly devote that attention to its careful revision which he considered necessary. Consequently, he requested me to undertake this duty for him.

It has been a pleasant labour for me to supervise these pages, as they have been passing through the press. Not only has it revived my knowledge of the religion of ancient Britain; but it has also re-awakened the pleasurable recollections and the interest which I felt twenty-one years ago when I read the proofs of the first edition. I have renewed my acquaintance with the sages, patriots, and heroes of "the days of old," who have brought back to my mind scenes totally unlike those of the present day. Generation after generation have passed in review before me on the great highway of time, among some of whom the light of Christianity shone brightly, whilst among others of them it has waned until it has well-nigh vanished, or has been comparatively eclipsed by thick-gathering errors. My convictions of the true and right have been strengthened, and my faith has been confirmed; as I have again traced the influence of those baneful and pernicious doctrines which have impeded, and of those vital truths which have promoted, the Gospel life of our land.

THE HISTORY
OF THE
RELIGION OF ANCIENT BRITAIN.

ancient times for the countenance and support of many opinions and practices not taught in the Holy Scriptures.

It must, therefore, be considered important to investigate in a candid and Christian spirit the introduction of Christianity into this country, its progress, and its decline into superstition. The author does not suppose that the present effort will fully meet the case; but amidst numerous other avocations he has done what he could. He has particularly felt the inconvenience of the great distance at which he is placed from all large and valuable public libraries.

It has been the writer's earnest endeavour to treat the whole subject in a decidedly religious temper of mind. One of his most valued friends, to whom the manuscript was submitted, suggested that this course was likely, in certain quarters, to make the work unpopular. It may be so; although the author is unwilling to believe that this cause will operate disadvantageously to any very considerable extent. He has, however, made his choice, and is prepared for the result. But though he has endeavoured to maintain throughout the work a distinct recognition of scriptural Christianity in its pure and vital character, he has the fullest confidence in declaring that the views which it exhibits are not sectarian. His design has been to assert scriptural truth, and not to give pain or offence to any serious mind. He has attempted correctly to delineate the early history of our own country, and especially of its religion; and not to exaggerate or extenuate, for the gratification and confirmation of party prejudices.

It only remains to add, that although, in the prosecution of his object, the author has freely availed himself of the labours of preceding writers, he has, to the best of his knowledge, avoided relying on any but those of acknowledged authority. The volume is now sub-

mitted to the public, with some anxiety, yet with an earnest hope that it may be found capable of communicating to many readers some additional information on the religious condition of our own country in the early stages of its history.

TREVU, CAMBORNE,
March 26th, 1844.

THE author, while engaged in various pursuits, was agreeably surprised by a demand for a second edition of this volume. He has endeavoured to respond to this call, in a manner which he trusts will be appreciated by the public. The whole subject has been carefully revised; some important additions have been made; and he hopes the whole is rendered more deserving of the kindness with which the first edition was received.

TREVU, CAMBORNE,
July 30th, 1846.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE ANCIENT BRITONS.

	PAGE
Introductory Remarks	1
The Aborigines of Britain	3
The Welsh Triads	4
Earliest Traditions	8
The first settlers in Britain	9
The Kymry	9
The Kynetæ	11
Phenician intercourse	12
Phenician navigation	13
The era of Phenician trade with Britain	15
The expedition of Melcarthus	15
Melcarthus takes possession of Gades and Cape Artabri	17
Melcarthus founds Alesia	18
Melcarthus visits Britain	19
The Cassiterides	20
The Trojan visit to Britain	21
Ancient Britain known to the Greeks	23
Grecian Commerce with Britain	24
Britain colonized	25
Civilization	25
The feudal system	27
Intellectual caste	27
The Druids	28
The learning of the Druids	29
The population of Britain	31
The wealth of the British chiefs	32
The useful arts	32
The Britons resist Roman invasion	33

CHAPTER II.

THE RELIGION OF THE BRITONS.

	PAGE
The primitive religion of the Aborigines	35
The religion of Noah	35
Druidic knowledge of God	37
The immortality of the soul	39
Days for religious worship	40
Sacred places	41
The origin of the Druidic priesthood	44
The Druids were the teachers of the people	45
Druidic Theology	47
The term Druid	49
The Supreme Being	50
The Divine Unity	51
The Druids were not gross idolaters	53
They were not fatalists	54
Their Worship	55
Their Sacrifices	57
Human Sacrifices	58
The Mistletoe	60
The augury and divination of the Druids	62
The Bards	63
Influence of the Druidic religion	65
The authority of the Druids	66
The preservation of patriarchal doctrines	67

CHAPTER III.

THE SUBJECTION OF BRITAIN TO THE ROMANS.

Julius Cæsar invades Britain	69
His second invasion	71
Cassivelaunus defeated	73
Cunobelinus	75
Aulus Plautius lands in Britain	77
Ostorius Scapula	78
Caractacus defeated	79
The conquest of Anglesea	81
The defeat of Boadicea	82
Agricola governs Britain	83

CHAPTER IV.

THE RELIGION INTRODUCED INTO BRITAIN BY THE ROMANS.

	PAGE
Agricola promotes the cultivation of the Arts and Sciences	85
Roman Colonies established	86
Improvements in the useful Arts	87
Commerce extended	88
General progress of the Britons	88
Roman Polytheism	90
The Creed of the Roman people	93
Their Rites	94
Their Festivals	95
Their Sacrifices	96
Their Lustrations	97
The soul and its destiny	98
Cicero	99
Virgil	100
Providence	102
The moral character of the Roman religion	103
The spirit of devotion	105
The ritual of its worship	105
The Pontifices	106
The Augurs	107
The Decemviri	108
The Epulones	109
The Vestals	110
Polytheistic idolatry extended throughout Britain	111

CHAPTER V.

THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ	113
The Gospel was not preached in Britain before the reign of Claudius Cæsar	114
The Apostle Peter	115
Joseph of Arimathea	116
King Lucius	119
The Apostle Paul	122

CONTENTS.

xiii

	PAGE
The testimonies of Tertullian, Origen, Theodoret, and Eusebius	124
Earliest British traditions	128
Pudens, Linus, and Claudia	131
The Gospel embraced and extended by King Lucius . . .	135
Buildings erected for Worship	137
The Diocletian persecution	138
Alban	140
The primitive Christian Church	143
“Presbyter” and “bishop”	144
“One bishop and one church”	147
“Country bishops”	148
The ordination of Ministers	148
The formation of churches	149
Worship	150
Council of Presbyters	153
Synods	154
Patriarchs	155
The Council of Arles	156
The Arian controversy	159
Arianism in Britain	163
Pelagianism	165
Pelagianism confuted by Germanicus and Lupus at Verulam	168
The “Hallelujah” Victory	169
Keby	171
Ninian and Patrick	173
The treatise of Fastidius, on “The Character of a Christian Life”	175

CHAPTER VI.

THE ARRIVAL AND ASCENDANCY OF THE SAXONS.

The decline of Rome	179
The Saxons	179
Their piratical excursions	181
Carausius	182
The Scots and Picts	184
The twofold division of Britain	187

	PAGE
Vortigern and Aurelius	188
Hengist and Horsa	188
Hengist takes possession of Kent	190
The Heptarchy	191
Arthur defeats the Saxons at Badon Hills	192
The Britons retire into Cornwall and Wales	193
The characteristics of the Saxons	194
Their castes	195
Their laws	197
Their usages	198
The changes effected in Britain by the Saxon invasion	199

CHAPTER VII.

THE RELIGION OF THE SAXONS.

Woden or Odin	201
Four persons of this name	202
Runic characters	204
The Edda	206
The Voluspa and the Havamaal	207
The Scandinavian Mythology	208
The immortality of the soul	210
Valhalla	211
Regner Lodbrog	212
Gimle	214
Nifleheim	215
Nastrande	216
Odin	217
Frigga, or Freya	218
Thor	219
Loke	222
Saxon temples—Priests	223
Sacrifices	225
Augury and Magic	226
“The Runic chapter”	226
Saxon Morals	227
The moral maxims of the Havamaal	229
Traditions of Creation	231
Ymer	232

CONTENTS.

xv

	PAGE
The Creation of Man	233
The future destruction of all things	235
A new earth	237
Paganism established in Britain	238

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY FROM THE DEPARTURE OF THE ROMANS TO THE MISSION OF AUGUSTINE.

The mystic theology of the third century	241
A double rule of sanctity	241
Ascetics	242
Anthony, the father of Monachism	243
Benedict and Patrick	244
Relics	245
The Christianity of the greater part of Britain over- whelmed by Paganism	245
The Christianity of Wales and Cornwall	246
The History of Gildas	247
The Epistle of Gildas	248
Dubricius	252
David	253
Columba, or Colum-kille	254
His remarkable missionary success	256
He promoted Monasticism	259
The Monks of Iona	261
The Christianity of Cornwall	261
Irish saints visit Cornwall	262
Germoch and Ia	263
Piran	264
The zeal of the Monks of Iona	265
The Christianity of the Dark Ages	266

CHAPTER IX.

THE PROGRESS OF ERROR IN THE CHURCH OF ROME PRIOR TO THE MISSION OF AUGUSTINE.

The religion taught by Jesus Christ	271
The early triumphs of the Cross	272
Roman heathenism mingled with Christianity	273

	PAGE
Celibacy	274
Asceticism	276
Superstitious reverence of the dead	278
Demons	281
The progress of demonolatry in the Church	283
Relics	285
The worship of the dead	287
The Sacraments	289
The mode of their administration	291
Baptismal efficacy	293
Clinical baptism	295
Exorcism added to baptism	297
Baptismal regeneration	298
Erroneous doctrines concerning the Lord's Supper	300
Oblations for the dead	303
Ceremonies connected with the Eucharist	304
Incense used at its celebration	305
"The canon of the Mass"	307
Clerical aggrandizement	308
Priestly power	310
The effect produced by Synods	312
The four great errors of the early Romish Church	313

CHAPTER X.

THE MISSION OF AUGUSTINE, AND THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY
AMONG THE ANGLO-SAXONS.

Gregory the Great sends Augustine to Britain	316
His reception by Ethelbert	318
Mellitus and Justus sent to Essex	319
The directions of Gregory	320
Augustine confers with the Christian ministers of Wales	322
Augustine's second conference with the British bishops	324
The British Church resists Romish authority	325
The invasion of North Wales	326
Laurentius succeeds Augustine.	328
The conversion of Eadbald	329
Paulinus labours in Northumbria	331
Christianity discussed in a Witena-gemot	332

CONTENTS.

xvii

	PAGE
Christianity adopted in Northumbria	334
Christianity introduced into East Anglia	336
Aidan takes charge of the Northumbrian Church	337
Birinus preaches to the West Saxons	339
The Gospel introduced into Mercia	341
Lady Hilda	342

CHAPTER XI.

THE RELIGION OF THE SAXON AND BRITISH CHURCHES UNTIL THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ROMISH UNIFORMITY.

Christianity based on revealed truth	345
The Scriptures studied by the British Christians	346
The testimony of Bede	347
Simplicity of the rites of the native Christians	348
Spirituality of British bishops	349
Arrogant pretensions of the Bishop of Rome	351
The progress of the Romish Mission	353
The Romish missionaries unsuccessful	357
The political power of the Romish priests	358
Their claims of authority	359
The synod at Whitby	360
Conformity discussed	361
The decision of the king	366
The results of this award	367
Conformity with Romish usages	369
Romish canons for the British Church	370
The diocess of Northumbria divided	372
Wilfrid appeals to the Pope	372
The Pope's authority disregarded	373
Theodore	375
Wilfrid	376
The Pope and the Anglo-Saxon Church	377

CHAPTER XII.

THE LEARNING, DOCTRINES, AND PIETY OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH.

Anglo-Saxon poetry	379
Cædmon	380
Schools established by Theodore and Adrian	384

	PAGE
The erudition of Aldhelm	385
The learning of Bede	387
The school of Alcuin	388
The Scriptures, the Anglo-Saxon standard of faith	389
The Anglo-Saxon versions of the four Gospels	391
The study of the Scriptures enforced	393
Transubstantiation not believed	395
Purgatory	397
Prayers for the dead	398
The invocation of saints	400
The Virgin Mary	402
Relics, pictures, and images	403
Idolatry associated with the Church of Christ	404
Sacramental efficacy	406
Penances	408
Spiritual condition of the Church	411
The life and piety of Bede	413
Practical religion of the Anglo-Saxon Church	418

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PRIESTCRAFT CORRUPTION AND DECLINE OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH.

Admonitions of the Council at Cloveshoo	421
Interments in churchyards	421
Cuthbert buried in the Cathedral of Canterbury	422
The famous edict of Leo Isaurus	423
Changes in the Saxon kingdoms	424
Tithes	425
Peter-pence	427
Grant of Ethelwolf to the Church	429
Remarkable charter of Ethelwolf	429
Secular condition of the clergy improved	430
Decline of piety and learning	431
Dunstan	432
The Britons resist Romish customs	445
The ascendancy of Popery	447

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

	PAGE
Religion is founded in truth, and proceeds from Divine revelation	448
The ancient Britons connected with sacred history .	449
Their departure from the true faith	451
The first dispensation	452
The Romish religion introduced into Britain . . .	453
The Gospel brought into Britain	454
Arianism and Pelagianism	455
Invasion of the Scots and Picts	457
The ascendancy of the Saxons	458
Revival of religion in Ireland, Cornwall, Wales, and West Scotland	459
Traditions and their effects	461
The Gospel dispensation	463
Errors of the Church, prior to the Mission of Augustine	464
The labours of Augustine	465
The Church in the time of Dunstan	467
The Dark Ages	469
Vital Godliness	471
The Christian Ministry	472
The Bible	473
Conclusion	474

THE HISTORY

OF THE

RELIGION OF ANCIENT BRITAIN.

CHAPTER I.

THE ANCIENT BRITONS.

To obtain a clear knowledge and a correct estimate of the religion of the ancient Britons is very difficult. It will greatly facilitate our apprehension of this subject if we first become acquainted with the chief events which contributed to mould their national character. Their origin and early political state are closely interwoven with legends and traditions. Notwithstanding that all the old documents which refer to these circumstances have been patiently studied by many learned and eminent scholars, who have supplied us with numerous volumes as the result of their researches, the facts of these records still remain shrouded in great obscurity. The investigation of ancient history, like the prospect of an extensive landscape, always exhibits extremely remote objects, which are really perceived, but which cannot be correctly defined. Mystery hangs over what is afar off in time as well as in space. Standing upon the summit of a lofty hill, and looking at a wide range of scenery, we clearly discern its near and contiguous features, and can easily judge of their several forms, qualities, and relations; as the objects fall into the background, they become more and more confused in appearance, and, although all of them are sufficiently visible to evidence their existence and locality, yet they are so vaguely

observed that it is impossible strictly to mark their outlines ; while, stretching onward to the horizon, hill and dale, field and forest, lose their distinctive aspect and colour in a misty, atmospheric haze, and are so seen that we cannot exactly tell what they are. So it is in history. We can survey the progress of nations, and can, confident of success, pursue our examination back as far as the light of full and accurate annals will illuminate the past ages ; but there is a distance beyond which this light fails, and gradually fades away into the dim glimmer of myth and fable, which baffles the most critical, experienced, and penetrating vision. Absolute certainty cannot be expected concerning these remote eras : we must rest satisfied with a greater or lesser degree of probability.

This uncertainty respecting the origin of nations has occasioned some students to turn in disgust from all such inquiries, and to pronounce them unworthy of notice. But there are many and strong reasons to justify a different conclusion. In addition to others, it may fairly be urged, that no ancient nation with which we are acquainted presents us with any definite point at which authentic history ceases to teach, and beyond which there is no guide but tradition. The case we have before us is of this kind. If we take the invasion of Britain by the Romans, under Julius Cæsar, as a period from which we have an authentic history of this island, it will soon be found that, subsequently to that event, much uncertainty hangs over many important particulars ; while it is equally clear, that, although we possess some correct information respecting the inhabitants of this country at that date, the further backward we recede, the more does this uncertainty increase, until we reach a time when it entirely prevails. It will, however, be evident, that some attention must be given to the history and character of the early inhabitants of Britain, before we can form a correct idea of the Roman invasion.

Such then precisely is the case with respect to the subject under consideration. Whatever point of time is selected for the commencement of our inquiry into the religion of

this country, inconvenience will always result from our ignorance of the people in preceding periods ; unless we refer, as far back as our slender means of information will allow, to the earliest of its inhabitants, and, gradually descending the stream of time, enlarge our observation, and perfect our knowledge in the clearer light of authentic annals.

Julius Cæsar informs us, that, when he landed in this country, there were at least two different races of people living on the island. "The inland parts of Britain," he says, "are inhabited by those whom fame reports to have been natives of the soil. The sea-coast is peopled with Belgians. These last, passing over from different parts, and settling in the country, still retain the names of the different states from which they are descended." * This information, coming to us from a person who possessed ample means of knowledge, is worthy of great attention. We also find, that in earlier times the Greeks had some knowledge of the island ; and it is believed that they carried on a considerable trade with its inhabitants. This commercial intercourse is fixed by various authors at a period extending from B.C. 500 to B.C. 200. At a time yet more remote, the Phenician inhabitants of Tyre, we are informed, visited the western parts of Britain, and purchased of the inhabitants tin, and other productions of the soil. The commencement of this traffic is supposed to have been in a year ranging between B.C. 1200 and B.C. 600. With the exception of the difference of opinion as to the point of time, these events are considered to be well authenticated. Within the period allotted for Phenician intercourse, an ancient account states that Britain was visited by the immediate descendants of the Trojan heroes, who, having united together after the fall of that city, came to this country and settled. Yet those narratives do not profess to account for the origin of the first inhabitants of the island. But we have some remains preserved amongst the descendants of that people of whom Cæsar speaks as "natives of the soil," which pretend to afford this information, stating a variety of particulars re-

* *De Bello Gallico*, lib. v., cap. 12.

specting the chief and his followers who first occupied the country.

These allusions to the first inhabitants of Britain are found in the Welsh language. They profess to be the substance of traditions handed down from the times of the Druids, and have been preserved amongst the descendants of the ancient Britons in the form of Triads,*—a mode of composition by which three events, that appear to have some analogy to each other, are arranged together. The following are selected, as bearing immediately on the subject under consideration:—

“IV. There are three pillars of the nation of the Isle of Britain. The first was Hu the Mighty, who brought the

* We are aware that some writers altogether reject the authority of those Welsh remains. Their authenticity has, however, been investigated by several eminent scholars, among whom we notice the following:—

Sharon Turner says: “The historical Triads have been obviously put together at very different periods. Some appear to be very ancient. Some allude to circumstances about the first population and early history of the island, of which every other memorial has perished. The Triads were mentioned by Camden with respect. Mr. Vaughan, the antiquary of Hergest, refers them to the seventh century. Some may be records of more ancient traditions, and some may be of more recent date. I think them the most curious, on the whole, of all the Welsh remains.”—“Vindication,” p. 587.

Llwyd states, that there are two mss. of these historical Triads; one in the Red Book of Hergest, imperfectly written on parchment in the fourteenth century. It consists of two chapters.

The Rev. Edward Davies observes: “We find among the oldest Welsh mss. many historical notices upon the model of the Druidical Triads, and purporting to be the remains of Druidical ages. Their contents furnish, in my opinion, strong evidence of their authenticity. I cannot account for them at all upon other grounds. Many collections of these Triads are preserved at this day, in old copies upon vellum.”—DAVIES’S “Celtic Researches,” p. 152.

The editors of the Welsh Archæology say: “The Triads may be considered amongst the most valuable and curious productions preserved in the Welsh language; and they contain a great number of memorials of the remarkable events which took place among the ancient Britons. Unfortunately, however, they are entirely deficient with respect to dates; and, considered singly, they are not well adapted to preserve the connexion of history. Yet a collection of Triads combined together, as these are, condense more information into a small compass than is to be accomplished, perhaps, by any other method; and, consequently, such a mode of composition is superior to all others for the formation of a system of tradition.”

nation of the Kymry first to the Isle of Britain ; and they came from the summer country, which is called Defrobani ;" (that is, where Constantinople now stands ;*) "and they came over the Hazy Sea to the Isle of Britain, and to Armorica, where they settled. The second was Prydain, the son of Aedd the Great, who first organized a social state and sovereignty in Britain ; for, before that time, there was no justice but what was done by favour, nor any law except that of superior force. The third was Dyvwall Moelmud ; for he first made arrangements respecting the laws, maxims, customs, and privileges of the country and tribe. And on account of these reasons they were called *the three pillars* of the nation of the Kymry.

"V. There were three social tribes of the Isle of Britain. The first was the tribe of the Kymry, who came to the Isle of Britain with Hu the Mighty, because he would not possess a country and land by fighting and pursuit, but by justice and tranquillity. The second was the tribe of Lloegrians,† who came from Gascony ; and they were descended from the primitive tribe of the Kymry. The third were the Brython,‡ who came from Armorica, and who were descended from the primitive tribe of the Kymry. These were called *the three peaceful tribes*, because they came by mutual consent and tranquillity ; and these tribes were descended from the primitive tribe of the Kymry, and they had all three the same language and speech.

"VI. There were three refuge-seeking tribes that came to

* "The words included within crotchets do not belong to the original Triad, but are the comment of some antiquarian of the twelfth century, when, it is very probable, many documents, no longer extant, containing a fuller account, justified the insertion of that clause, for better understanding the Triad."—JAMES'S "Patriarchal Religion of Britain," p. 14. 8vo. London, 1836. The Rev. Thomas Wood observes, that *Defrobani* is rendered "more correctly *Dyffynbanu*, or *Dyffyn-albanu*, that is, the deep vales or glens of Albania, a country between the Euxine and Caspian Seas."—"Parish Church," p. 4.

† "The ancient name of the Loire was Liger. Did the Lloegrwys give their name to that river, or did they take their name from the river ?"

‡ "Brython, a term implying, 'Persons of warlike habits.'"—PROBERT'S "Ancient Laws of Cambria," p. 375. London, 1823.

the Isle of Britain ; and they came under the peace and permission of the tribe of the Kymry, without arms and without opposition. The first was the tribe of the Caledonians in the north. The second was the Irish tribe, who dwell in the Highlands of Scotland. The third were the people of Galedin, who, when their country was drowned, came in naked vessels to the Isle of Wight, where they had land granted them by the tribe of the Kymry. They had no privilege of claim in the Isle of Britain, but they had land and protection assigned to them under certain limitations ; and it was stipulated that they should not possess the rank of native Kymry, until the ninth of their lineal descendants."

If we could implicitly rely on this information, it would afford a clear and satisfactory account of the original occupation of this island. But these Triads, although entitled to great attention, are not history. They can only be regarded as traditions delivered (perhaps orally) at a very early age, afterwards committed to writing by the Bards, and thus preserved to our day. In the lapse of ages, errors and corruptions may have crept into these compositions ; additions may have been made to them ; and it is certain that many Triads, formerly known, have perished. Yet, even in their imperfect state, they give us much intelligence respecting the aborigines of Britain ; and it is worthy of remark, that, were they suppressed, we should be utterly destitute of light on this interesting subject.

As it is not our intention to enter into a lengthened examination of these ancient remains, we will add two or three other Triads for the purpose of showing, that they bear internal evidence of great antiquity ; and then collect what appears to be the amount of information which we possess respecting the first inhabitants of our country.

" XIII. There were *three awful events* in the Isle of Britain. The first was the bursting of the Lake of Floods, and the rushing of an inundation over all the lands, until all persons were destroyed, except Dwyvan and Dwyvack, who escaped in an open vessel ; and from them the Isle of Britain was re-peopled," &c.

“XCVII. The *three primary and extraordinary works* of the Isle of Britain : The ship of Nwydd Nav Neivion, which brought in it a male and female of all living things, when the Lake of Floods burst forth ; the large horned oxen of Hu the Mighty, that drew the crocodile from the lake of the land, so that the lake did not burst forth any more ; and the stone of Gwyddon Ganhebon, upon which all the arts and sciences in the world are engraven.”

“XCII. The *three inventors of song and record* of the Kymry nation : Gwyddon Ganhebon, who was the first in the world that composed vocal song ; Hu the Mighty, who first applied vocal song to strengthen memory and record ; and Tydain, the father of poetic genius, who first conferred art on poetic song, and made it the medium of record. From what was done by these three men, originated Bards and Bardism ; and the privilege and institutes of these things were organized by the three primary Bards, Plennydd, Alawn, and Gwron.”

The thirteenth Triad, just quoted, evidently refers to the general deluge ; and the circumstance, that this awful event is supposed to have taken place in Britain, serves to prove the extreme antiquity of the tradition ; while the account given of the building of the ship, the entire destruction of all the creatures who were not admitted into it, the preservation of a male and female of all living things ; the allusion, even at that time, to a stone being saved which had the arts and sciences engraven on it, and the celebration of the author of this knowledge, as living prior to the hero of Britain, Hu the Mighty :—all this bears such striking similarity to the traditions preserved among the most ancient nations in the eastern part of the world, that we cannot conceive the possibility of its having been invented in any period of the dark ages : it therefore strengthens our confidence in the general teaching of the Triads.

Another point of importance is, that the person who is celebrated as having first led his tribe into Britain, which was before that time uninhabited, is also said to have been the patriarch who was preserved at the deluge. This pre-

cisely accords with the traditions of the most important primitive nations. Thus we find the Phenicians tracing their ancestry upwards to the first man; the Persians identifying their Mahabad both with Adam and Noah; the Chaldeans recording ten generations of kings before the Deluge; the Indians connecting the origin of their nation with the original pair; and the Egyptians extending their kingdom into antediluvian times. Now it will be immediately seen, that such traditions, wherever they exist, always go to prove that the nation holding them was peopled by a branch of Noah's family soon after the dispersion from Shinar; or that the first inhabitants of such countries, however long they might have wandered on their way, had never obtained a settled location in any other country.

If, for instance, Hu Gadarn and his company had been a part of the surplus population of Gaul or Germany, whose ancestors had lived for ages in either of those places, and who had journeyed thence into Britain; how could the leader in such an enterprise have been associated with the patriarch of the ark? How could their newly-acquired home have been regarded as the principal scene of the deluge? Would not all their recollections and traditions refer to the parent country from whence they had so recently come? But in a case like that of Egypt, when Misraim, the grandson of Ham, as the patriarch of his tribe, leaves Shinar, and journeys with them to their destined territory, nothing appears more reasonable than that the posterity of such persons should, in process of time, associate all their knowledge of the history of the first ages with the character and person of their first leader and sovereign, by whom they stood directly related to the primitive family.* Such would also

* The several particulars in which the Triads exhibit the prominent circumstances connected with the patriarch of the ark, and thus identify Hu the Mighty with Noah, are shown by Mr. Davies in the following form:—

- “1. He lived in the time of the flood; and,
- “2. With his oxen, he performed some achievements which prevented a repetition of that calamity.—Triad xc.
- “3. He first collected together, or carried, the primitive race; and,
- “4. Formed them into communities or families.—Triad lvii.

be the case, when several generations intervened between the second father of the world and the leader of a colony, provided his followers acquired no settled residence before they reached their ultimate destination.

As far, therefore, as we can depend upon those British traditions, they would lead us to believe, that the first settlers here were a branch of the family of Japheth, who, after journeying across the continent of Europe, finally settled in this island. This conjecture is of great antiquity. Theophilus, who was bishop of Antioch in the year 160, says, that "Asiatic emigrants arrived in Britain soon after the dispersion from Babel."

Vain would it be to speculate on the exact time when this colonization was effected. The early history of Europe affords abundant evidence that it was traversed in very remote times by nomadic hordes, who journeyed from place to place, supporting themselves by pasturage and hunting, occasionally staying in one locality long enough to obtain a harvest from the soil of some fertile district, which would then be abandoned, and another journey commenced. In this career, different families would break off in succession from the parent stock, and take up their settled residence in the several countries through which they passed.

In this manner, there is reason to believe, the great family of the Kymry, Kymbri, or Kymerians, as they have been

"5. He first gave traditional laws for the regulation and government of society.—Triad xcii.

"6. He was eminently distinguished for his regard to justice, equity, and peace.—Triad v.

"7. He conducted the several families of the first race to their respective settlements in the various regions.—Triad iv.

"8. But he had instructed this race in the art of husbandry, previous to their separation.—Triad lvi.

"All the primitive nations give an account somewhat similar of the destruction of the old world by water, and of the preservation of a single family in a boat or ark. Yet all of them make the boat to rest upon some mountain, or on the bank of some river or lake, in their own territories, where some distinguished personages amongst their own ancestors are put to land. *A history thus circumstanced could not have been borrowed from strangers; the nations must have derived it in a direct line from their common parents.*"—"Celtic Researches," pp. 164, 165.

variously called, journeyed from the Thracian Bosphorus. Having roamed over Europe, and arrived at the coast washed by the German Ocean, one of their tribes, desirous of taking up a settled abode, and indisposed to be subject to those aggressions which numerous and powerful bodies were likely to make on small and peaceable settlements, crossed the sea, and took up their residence in this island. As we have already observed, the precise date of these events cannot now be ascertained. We know that the Kymri were in Europe in the time of Homer; but it is not known whether he alludes to the principal body, or to a tribe who remained behind them in the eastern part of Europe.

We are aware that the Triads may appear a flimsy foundation for any opinions on this subject. But it should be remembered, that our knowledge of the early history even of Greece and Rome rests on accounts which are so involved in fable, that it has been found utterly impossible to separate the matters of fact from the creations of fancy; and yet a perusal of these is a necessary introduction to an intimate acquaintance with the origin of those celebrated nations. Whatever opinion therefore may be formed of the Welsh records, it may be safely asserted, that the general scope of their teaching is consistent with itself, and harmonizes with the early traditions of almost every other ancient people.

It is beyond our province to follow the speculations in which the learned have indulged respecting the particular branch of the family of Japheth, from whom our ancestors descended: it will be sufficient to have shown their probable origin, and to add, that, according to the authorities which we have cited, the original colony was followed by two others. These were all members of the great Kymry family. Afterwards, we are told, three other parties came; and, by the consent of the original proprietors of the island, had portions of land assigned to them, under certain limitations. The terms which the Triads state are remarkable for their wisdom and simplicity: "It was stipulated, that they should not possess the rank of native Kymry till the ninth of their lineal descendants." Thus they had a constant motive to

good order and obedience to the laws,—a motive which acquired increasing influence with each succeeding generation, until they merged into the great body of the nation.

The following reasoning and facts have been given, for the purpose of showing that the ancient Britons were descended from Ashkenaz, the son of Gomer, the son of Japheth:—

“Herodotus, who has been justly termed the Father of History, because one of the oldest and best historians unconnected with the Bible, and who flourished about 450 B.C., has given some account of all the nations that were then known. He says, that the most remote inhabitants of the west of Europe were the Kynetæ. His words are these: ‘Commencing with the Celtæ, who, except the Kynetæ, are the most remote inhabitants in the west of Europe.’ The Celtæ were the ancient Gauls who inhabited the country that skirted the German Ocean, now called France, the Netherlands, &c. Beyond these, to the west, were no countries except Britain and Ireland. Consequently, the Kynetæ,* whom Herodotus places to the west of the Celtæ, must have been the inhabitants of the British Isles. The name was anciently acknowledged by the aboriginal Britons.

“Aneurin, a British bard of the sixth century, in the conclusion of his *Gododin*, distributes the aborigines of the British Isles into three distinct tribes or colonies, according to the order in which they had arrived; namely, the *Cynt*, (pronounced *Kynt*,) a *Gwyddie*, a *Phydin*: ‘the *Kynt*, the Irish, and the North Britons;’ making the *Kynt*, or Kynetæ of Herodotus, the first tribe that landed in Britain. Ash-Kenaz and *Kynt*, or Kynetæ, are likewise names so clearly identified, as to show that the latter were originally sprung from the former.

“Furthermore, Ashkenaz being the eldest son of Gomer, who was the eldest son of Japheth, who was the eldest son of

* It is worthy of observation, that the part of Britain nearest the continent, and within sight of Gaul, which is now called Kent, always bore a similar designation, one that is very analogous to the Kynetæ of Herodotus, and the *Cynt* of the ancient Britons. Hence the Latins called it *Cantium*, and the Saxons *Kanti-wara-syke*, or, “Kentish-men’s country.”

Noah, his descendants called themselves Cymry, (pronounced *Kymry*,) which means, in plain English, 'the first race.' Hence the Greek writers, adopting their own term, called them *Kimmerioi*, and the Latins, *Cymbri*; and *Cymry* is the name by which the aborigines of Britain have uniformly distinguished themselves, from the remotest antiquity up to the present moment. And their own language, which they have retained through all revolutions, they have invariably called *Cymræg*, which means 'the language of the aborigines,' or 'the language of the first race.' " *

The latter opinion appears to afford a much more probable origin of the term *Kymry* than that which refers to primogeniture.

If we have been thus far right in our conjectures, the first population of Britain must, in their character and circumstances, have borne some analogy to those patriarchal tribes which in early times traversed Western Asia, and of whom we may form an idea from the account which the holy Scriptures give of Abraham and his descendants. They would, therefore, be characterized by great simplicity of manners, while they, nevertheless, possessed extensive information. With this knowledge, however, we can easily conceive the co-existence of great ignorance of the handicraft arts, and of the other productive causes of the comforts and conveniences of civilized life. Their long journeying and unsettled state of life, must have been very unfavourable to the cultivation of the manual arts. The want of implements and of materials would be severely felt; and therefore, on settling in Britain, they would have to bend all their energies to the production of the bare necessities of life.

Having no more ample information of their progress or condition, we now direct our attention to the fact of Phenician intercourse, and the circumstances connected with the trade which it produced.

The Phenicians were the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, and a small landed district in the vicinity of these cities on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Because of

* JAMES'S "Patriarchal Religion of Britain," p. 13.

their limited territory and their peculiar genius, their principal occupations were navigation and commerce ; and such was their success in these pursuits that their riches and power appear to have equalled those of most of the great nations of antiquity. As their annals have perished, we have no means of ascertaining the precise period at which their prosperous career commenced. Tyre is said by Hales to have been built B.C. 2267.* It was founded by a colony from Sidon. This parent city, named after the eldest son of Canaan, arose in an age so remote that no existing record or tradition refers to it. Joshua, A.M. 1602, called it the "great Sidon." (Joshua xi. 8 ; xix. 28.) In the days of Homer, the commercial and manufacturing skill of this people had become widely celebrated. He speaks of their embroidered female dresses, and silver cups curiously wrought ; and says, that the Sidonians "were skilled in many arts."† The prophet Ezekiel, B.C. 595, gives a particular description of the riches and extent of Tyrian commerce ; and clearly exhibits such an extended intercourse with foreign nations, as could only have arisen from a long-continued course of commercial enterprise. (Ezek. xxvii., xxviii.) And, as a further proof that the Phenicians had, about this time, attained their utmost skill in navigation, Herodotus informs us,‡ that, just before this period, (B.C. 600,) Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, sent a Phenician fleet to circumnavigate Africa. He says, "The Phenicians embarked in the Erythrean (Red) Sea, sailed into the Southern Ocean, and, when autumn was come, went ashore on that part of the coast of Africa which they had reached, and sowed corn. Having waited till the harvest, and having obtained supplies of provisions, they again put to sea. After thus navigating for two years, in the third they arrived at the Pillars of Hercules," (the Straits of Gibraltar,) "and returned safely to Egypt. They stated on their return, that they had sailed entirely

* HALES'S "Analysis of Chronology," vol. i., p. 444. Second Edition. 8vo. London, 1830.

† *Iliad*. lib. vi., 289 ; xxiii., 743 ; *Odys.*, xv., 115-118.

‡ *Melpomene*, cap. xlii.

round Africa, *and had the sun on their right hand. This fact appears to me incredible ; but it may not to another. It was in this manner that Africa was known for the first time.*"

It will be seen, that the striking fact which the historian could not believe attests the truth of the entire account. Another important service is rendered by this extract: it clearly shows that while the Phenicians were able to accomplish voyages which even now are considered of high importance, the wisest of the Greeks were but children in geographical knowledge. Herodotus himself could not believe that the sun would be seen on the right hand in passing round the southern point of Africa.

If this estimate of the proficiency of the Phenicians in navigation appears improbable, it should be remembered that the learned Fuller asserts, they were well acquainted with the use of the magnet, the knowledge of which they endeavoured by all possible means to conceal from others ; and that Homer, speaking of the skill and success with which naval enterprises were conducted about the era of the Trojan war, seems to intimate that certain mariners possessed some mysterious power or occult knowledge, of which the world in general was utterly ignorant :—

" So shalt thou instant reach the realm assign'd,
In wondrous ships, self-moved, instinct with mind ;
No helm secures their course, no pilot guides ;
Like man, intelligent, they plough the tides,
Conscious of every coast and every bay,
That lies beneath the sun's all-seeing ray :
Though clouds and darkness veil the' encumber'd sky,
Fearless through darkness and through clouds they fly :
Though tempests rage, though rolls the swelling main,
The seas may roll, the tempests rage in vain.
Even the stern god that o'er the waves presides,
Safe as they pass, and safe repass, the tides,
With fury burns ; while, careless, they convey,
Promiscuous, every guest to every bay."

Odys., lib. viii.

From these statements it will appear, that the great era of Phenician navigation and commerce extended from B.C. 1600

to B.C. 500. We have therefore to inquire in what portion of this time they carried on a trade with Britain. Some light may be cast on this question by considering, that the articles which were exported from this island, and for which it was celebrated in all antiquity, were tin and lead. Now, if it be true, that those articles were obtained only from Britain and Spain to supply Western Asia, as well as Greece and Egypt, it will follow, that those places must have been explored at a very early period. For Moses speaks of tin and lead as being found among the spoils of the Midianites B.C. 1450 ; and Homer also alludes to these metals. Yet the opinion, that those metals were only procured from the west of Europe, is countenanced by Pliny, who, having referred to the use of tin during the Trojan war, states, that it was found with lead in his day both in Portugal and Galicia ; but that the best kind was obtained in most abundant quantities in Britain ; and adds, that the Indians, having none of these metals, were content to barter pearls and precious stones by way of exchange for them.* Herodotus, also, who wrote five hundred years before Pliny, states, that the tin used in Greece was procured from the islands called the Cassiterides, with which, however, he acknowledged that he was unacquainted. Yet, in the same account he shows, that the Baltic had been explored for commercial purposes ; intending by the Eridanus, not the Italian river of that name, as some have mistakenly supposed, but the Rho-daune, which empties itself into the Vistula, near Dantzic.†

But, not to rely on this circumstance, which, to say the least, renders the early discovery of Britain by the Phenicians probable, we are assured that the expedition of the Phenician Hercules into the West was undertaken about three hundred years before Jason sailed to Colchis, which was at least a generation before the Trojan war. This was the voyage ascribed to Melcarthus, who is said to have visited the coasts of Africa, Spain, and even Britain, as far as

* PLINII *Nat. Hist.*, lib. xxxiv., cap. 16, 17.

† *Thalia*, cap. cxv., with Larcher's note in Beloe's Translation.

Thulé.* This account would place the discovery of Britain about B.C. 1500. Yet, whatever doubts may rest on the exact period when this voyage was performed, it is certain that during its progress a settlement was effected at Gades (Cadiz) in Spain, where afterward a splendid temple to the Tyrian Hercules was built.

The establishment of the Phenicians at Cadiz is an unquestionable historical fact. Mr. Kenrick, who has most elaborately investigated the subject, says, "The first event in the history of the Phenicians, to which a date can be assigned, is the foundation of Gades, in the twelfth century before Christ." † But long before this, tin was known in Greece and Western Asia. And as we can find no vestige of information of this metal having been procured from the East, the inevitable induction is, that Phenician commerce with the West was carried on at a much earlier time. It can scarcely be supposed that an expedition of such magnitude as that ascribed to Melcarthus could have been made into countries with which the Phenicians were entirely unacquainted. It is probable, therefore, that occasional voyages had been made into the Atlantic Ocean, and that sufficient information of the resources of Western Europe had been procured to lead to the expedition of which Diodorus speaks as one of the labours of Hercules, but which certainly was the work of the Phenician hero Melcarthus.‡

But although Diodorus, misled by the name, and following the fashion of his day of attributing every great work to Grecian enterprise, confounded the Tyrian navigator with the son of Alcmena, the two persons were essentially different in all the prominent features of their character. Unlike the warlike hero of this name, so conspicuous in the Mythologies of Greece and Rome, the Tyrian Hercules was celebrated and adored for his exploits in navigation and commerce. He was also called Melcarthus, or Melicertes,

* M. HUET's "History of the Commerce and Navigation of the Ancients," chap. x.

† KENRICK's "Phenicia," p. 124.

‡ See my "Cassiterides," pp. 93-103.

that is, "King of the City;" and is considered the most ancient of those to whom important discoveries in the art of navigation and commerce have been ascribed. His name of Hercules is derived from the Phenician word *harokel*, which signifies "a merchant." He gained for himself a never-dying reputation by the success of his maritime enterprises.

In order, however, to form any idea of the extent of these in the Western Ocean, it is necessary that we follow the principal points of this legend, as far as we can find them supported by real historical evidence or existing facts, in order to perceive the strong probability, not to say certainty, of Britain having become known to the Phenicians at this period, if not before.

The first point in Western Europe to which the Phenician expedition appears to have been directed was Gades. Here it was opposed by three princes, sons of the king, with three armies; but they were defeated and slain by the superior power of the invaders. Having vanquished all his foes, and obtained possession of the island on which Gades was afterward built, with as much of the country about Tartessus as he required, Melcarthus proceeded northward.

We next find him taking possession of Cape Artabri, where he is said to have made a settlement, and to have established an important location on the site of the present Corunna. This is attested by ample evidence. We have only to cast our eye on the map of Europe to see the importance of this position to any commercial power having possession of Cadiz, and wishing to prosecute mercantile operations in the North of Europe. Here, we are assured by ancient authors, that altars were erected in honour of the Phenician Hercules; and it is an undoubted fact that here he built a "pharos," or lighthouse, for the guidance of his commercial marine in those seas, which was dedicated to Hercules. This old tower, having fallen into decay, was repaired or rebuilt by the Romans, who consecrated it to Mars. Its remains still exist, bearing a Latin inscription confirming the tradition that it was originally built by the Phenicians, and dedicated to Hercules. Malte-Brun conjectures that the modern name

of this town is derived from a corruption of the name of this pharos. These buildings were frequently called *columna*, from their resemblance to a *column*, which he thinks has been changed into *Corunna*.*

Having secured his conquests in Spain, Diodorus tells us that the Phenician hero proceeded further north, through Celtica, (Gaul,) putting "an end to the usual impieties and murdering of strangers," and founding a city, which he called Alesia, on account of the length of his expedition. This town (the modern Arras) was built on a hill, in a very strong position, about fifty miles from the coast, and nearly midway between Boulogne and Dieppe. Concerning this place Diodorus adds, "The Celtæ at this day have a great esteem and honour for this city, as being the chief and metropolis of all Gaul; and ever since the time of Hercules it has remained free, and never been taken by any to our very days; till at length Caius Cæsar took it by storm, and so it came into the hands of the Romans."† Cæsar confirms the account of Diodorus as to the capture of this city, by informing us that it was the scene of the last stand made by Vercingetorix against the Romans, and that here this Gallic chief fell with Alesia into the power of the imperial conqueror.‡

But what is still more remarkable, is the fact that at Alesia also time-honoured reports confirm the statements of Diodorus. We are assured "that, according to tradition, Alesia was founded by Hercules; which would imply that the place had been originally a Phenician stronghold, for the purposes of inland traffic."§ This tradition is supported by the fact that this town was supposed to be the first place where the art of tinning articles of metal and plating with silver was invented,—circumstances which appear to identify it with Phenician arts and influence. The account proceeds to state that, after he had founded Alesia, he fought with the giants Albion and Bergion.||

* MALTE-BRUN'S Geography, vol. viii., p. 72.

† DIODORUS SICULUS, lib. iv., cap. 1.

‡ *De Bello Gallico*, lib. vii., cap. 78–82.

§ *Ibid.*, lib. xvii., cap. 79, *note*. Bohn's Edition.

|| BRYANT'S Anal. An. Mythol., vol. ii., p. 341.

We have thus traced the prominent particulars of this legend, and found them confirmed by ancient traditions and existing facts, until the Phenician expedition must have been brought within sight of the white cliffs of Britain. And having done this, without attaching importance to the legendary conflict of Hercules with the giant Albion, we presume that few people will, under all these circumstances, believe that an expedition intended for commercial discovery would omit to investigate the resources of such a country as Britain. Indeed, that they did so, is proved by the fact, that for ages afterwards they were the only wholesale merchants of tin,—an article which was only produced in large quantities in this island, and which, Pliny asserts, Melicertes first brought from the Cassiterides.* The worship of this hero by the British Druids as the Tyrian Hercules, which will be mentioned more particularly hereafter, is strongly confirmatory of this opinion, and is attested not only by other evidence, but also by the discovery at Colchester in Essex of an altar with an inscription in Greek characters, which, when translated, reads as follows: “The oblation of the high priest to the Tyrian Hercules.”†

Gades was the great *entrepôt* through which their traffic was carried on. From this place a regular trade with Britain was maintained; and a variety of articles, both of export and import, were bought and sold. On this point, the testimony of Strabo is very explicit. He says: “Anciently the Phenicians alone engrossed this market, hiding the navigation from all others. When the Romans followed the course of a vessel, that they might discover the situation, the jealous pilot wilfully stranded his ship, misleading to the same destruction those who were tracing him. Escaping from the shipwreck, he was indemnified for his losses out of the public treasury.”

“As Herodotus intimates that the Cassiterides were, with respect to Greece, in the farthest parts of Europe; as Aristotle talks of *Keltic* tin, and Strabo describes both these

* *Nat. Hist.*, lib. vii., cap. 56.

† SIR WILLIAM BETHAM’S “The Gael and the Cimbri,” p. 96.

islands and Britain to be opposite to the Artabri, or Gallicia in Spain, but northward, and places them in the British climate; as in another passage he states them to be productive of tin, obviously connecting them at the same time with the British Islands; and, in another part, as being in the open sea north from the port of the Artabri of Gallicia; the most learned, both at home and abroad, have believed the Cassiterides to have been some of the British Islands.” *

This opinion is rendered extremely probable by the fact, that while the tin of Britain was highly celebrated in ancient times, it is not pretended that there was any other island or tin-producing country situated near the region designated by Strabo.

For fixing upon Cornwall and the Scilly Isles as the Cassiterides of the ancients, there is not only ample authority in the preceding facts, but the following passage from Diodorus Siculus, by exhibiting this trade as it continued to the time of the Romans, appears to be decisive. He says: “They that inhabit the British Promontory of Balerium, by reason of their converse with merchants, are more civilized and courteous to strangers than the rest are. These are the people that make the tin, which, with a great deal of care and labour, they dig out of the ground; and that being rocky, the metal is mixed with some veins of earth, out of which they melt the metal, and then refine it. Then they beat it into four-square pieces like to a die, and carry it to a British Isle near at hand, called *Ictis*; for, at low tide, all being dry between them and the island, they convey over in carts abundance of tin in the mean time. Hence the merchants transport to France the tin which they buy of the inhabitants.” †

The Phenicians, having discovered this country, purchased of the inhabitants tin, lead, iron, corn, cattle, and hides;

* SHARON TURNER'S Anglo-Saxon History, vol. i., pp. 52, 53.

† DIODORUS SICULUS, lib. v., cap. 2. Some writers have supposed, that, by the *Ictis* of Diodorus, the Isle of Wight is meant; but it is much more probable that St. Michael's Mount is intended, as it is in the immediate vicinity of the tin veins, and in other respects answers to his description; which the Isle of Wight does not.

and furnished them with salt, pottery, and vessels of brass. Without pretending to strict accuracy in such an obscure point, we shall perhaps best follow the indications which the general scope of the subject presents, by placing the commencement of this intercourse about B.C. 1500, although it is computed by Mr. Aylett Samnes to have begun two or three centuries later.*

But, whenever this trade began, it must have exerted a powerful and salutary influence upon the inhabitants of this country, especially upon those of its western peninsula. A constant commercial intercourse with the most polished nation of Western Asia would introduce some measure of refinement, and some degree of cultivation, into Britain. The extent of these, and the varied and interesting manner of their development, cannot now be ascertained. No Tacitus was alive to record its progress; or if at Gades or Tyre such memorials were made, they have long since sunk into oblivion.

Passing on from this particular,† we notice the account which speaks of the Trojan visit to Britain. This is derived from a work by Geoffry of Monmouth, which is said to be a Latin translation of an old English Chronicle. It states, that a Trojan chief, named Brutus, who was the great-grandson of the famed Æneas, having accidentally killed his father as he was hunting in one of the Italian forests, and being, in consequence, obliged to leave that country, withdrew to Greece, where he found the descendants of those Trojans who had been transported thither after the sacking of Troy, in a state of bondage. He put himself at their head, and offered to conduct them to another country; for which they sailed along the coast of Africa, until they arrived at the Straits of Gibraltar. Thence they kept along the coast of Spain, winding to the north and north-east, until they reached Gaul, where they attempted to settle; but,

* SAMNES'S *Britannia Antiqua Illustrata*. Fol. London, 1676.

† This subject may be further pursued by reference to WHITAKER'S "Manchester," and "History of the Britons;" TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. i.; SAMNES'S *Britannia*; JAMES'S "Patriarchal Religion," &c.

being forced to quit by the powerful opposition of the natives, they sailed across to Britain, and landed at Totness in Devonshire. The legend proceeds to state, that, having vanquished the original inhabitants, Brutus divided the country among his followers, and that from him descended a line of kings which continued unto the time of the Saxons. It will not be necessary to dwell on this account. The question is not, whether the pretended history of Geoffry is to be received or rejected; his composition is so obviously fabulous, that on it no dependence can be placed. But it does become a subject of inquiry, whether Geoffry invented this tale, or whether he did not enlarge and dramatize some traditions which he found floating down the stream of time. The latter conjecture appears to be the most probable. This will be seen from the fact, that while Geoffry wrote in the twelfth century, the outline of this same account is found in the writings of Nennius, who lived in the ninth.*

It is a remarkable circumstance, that the notion of the Trojan fugitives forming numerous settlements in various parts of Europe has been taken up and recorded by many ancient authors. "Thus Tacitus mentions an opinion of the Germans, that Ulysses was driven into the Northern Ocean, and built there Asciburgium; and that an altar dedicated to Ulysses, with the name of Laërtes his father, was found there. A Trojan colony is stated to have founded Trapano in Italy. Virgil intimates, that Antenor founded Padua. Pliny stations Dardani in Mœsia, which he extends from the Pontus to the Danube; and Strabo enumerates the Dardanidæ among the Illyrians. But the tradition more immediately connecting itself with the intimations of Nennius, is that noticed by Ammianus Marcellinus, that some Trojans, flying from the Greeks, and dispersed all around, occupied regions in Gaul, then uninhabited." †

Taliessin, a British Bard of the sixth century, frequently mentions Troy, and seems to allude to the same tradition.

* SIR WILLIAM BETHAM'S "The Gael and the Cymbri," pp. 291-314. 8vo. Dublin, 1834.

† TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. i., p. 64.

And Pedro de Rosas, in his History of Toledo, makes the following statement: "After the Celts, and as it were at the same time, came certain Greeks, bound for England and Ireland, and landed at Corunna." Their chieftains, according to Florian de Campo, and Don Rodrigo Ximenes, two other Spanish writers, were "Roman consuls," the one called Tolemon, the other Brutus, "while the colony itself consisted of Greeks." * This striking coincidence of the Chronicles of Spain must materially add to the credibility of the tradition on which Geoffry has built his story.

We have seen already, that the Greek writers had some knowledge of Britain: it will be important for us to notice the period and character of their intercourse with this island.

Here, however, our means of information are very limited; nor need we be surprised that Greek writers have not said more of Britain, when we find that neither Herodotus, Xenophon, nor any other ancient Greek writer, has even mentioned Rome, although it lay so much nearer to their own country, and was at that time rapidly rising into greatness.†

About 600 B.C. a colony of Greeks, expelled from Asia by the Persians, sailed to the coast of Gaul, and founded the city of Marseilles. Here, devoting themselves to commercial and maritime pursuits, they created a mart for the principal trade of the West. It appears, therefore, very probable, that this people would soon become acquainted with the commerce carried on with Britain, and as readily estimate its importance.

The excessive caution with which the Phenicians kept the knowledge of this trade from every other nation, has been already noticed; and this, perhaps, accounts for the obscurity and inaccuracy of some of the ancient statements respecting the British Islands, and also for the ignorance of the Greeks on the subject. When, however, they had an important settlement so near to the Straits of Hercules, and precisely in the line of transit, they must necessarily have

* JAMES'S "Patriarchal Religion of Britain," p. 22.

† ANDERSON'S "History of Commerce," vol. i., p. 61.

obtained some knowledge of it. This is rendered more probable, because the Phocæan Greeks, before they left Asia, were expert in navigation, and had made voyages to the Adriatic, and even to the coast of Spain.*

Soon after the building of Marseilles, a Greek colony, sent from Samos, and destined for Egypt, was driven by violent winds down the Mediterranean, and quite through the Straits of Gibraltar, on the coasts beyond which they formed settlements.† This prompted the inhabitants of Marseilles to explore those seas. They accordingly sent Pytheas to make discoveries in the Atlantic Ocean. He sailed from Marseilles, after having made an observation to determine its latitude, which enabled Eratosthenes and Hipparchus to calculate it with a precision which modern astronomers have found exact.‡ He coasted Spain, Portugal, and the British Channel; and passed along the eastern coast of Britain, till he reached the island which he has called Thulé. He is supposed to have gone to the sixty-eighth degree of latitude.§ From the fragments of his narrative which remain, it is evident that Britain was a principal object of his examination. This voyage took place about B.C. 330. And we have evidence that, soon after this period, the Greeks visited Britain, and carried on a trade with its inhabitants. For Polybius, a Greek, who flourished about B.C. 146, promised to write an account of the British Isles, and of the mode of preparing tin; a promise which Strabo says he performed, although the work is now lost. From this time down to that of Julius Cæsar, there can be no doubt that the Greeks continued to carry on a commercial intercourse with the western portion of this island. Hence Diodorus, in a passage already given, speaks at large of the tin-trade; and says that the metal was carried from Cornwall to France, then across that country to Marseilles and Narbonne, from whence it was trans-shipped to the East.

* HERODOTUS, lib. i., cap. 163-167.

† BORLASE'S "Antiquities of Cornwall," p. 32. Fol. London, 1769.

‡ TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. i., p. 60.

§ BORLASE'S "Antiquities of Cornwall," p. 33.

In addition to this commercial intercourse, we have express information from Cæsar, that the several states on the continent opposite to Britain had sent colonies to various parts of the eastern coast of the island. These retained their original designation, and were, as a people, quite distinct from the aboriginal inhabitants, who, it would appear, had retired before those intruders to the western parts of the country.

The small amount of knowledge which we possess on this subject is spread over fourteen centuries: it consequently becomes a difficult task for us to form any distinct conception of the civil and political state of the Britons. It would seem, that at first the aborigines of the country could not have been what we should now call "barbarians or savages." On the contrary, from the obvious scope of the history of the primitive families, there is every reason for believing that they were possessed of considerable general information. Their earliest traditions speak of the pre-existence of *letters*, *arts*, and *sciences*; and all the notices of the arrangements of their policy go to prove, that their original condition was neither ignorant nor uncivilized. Did they retain and improve this condition, or afterward degenerate into barbarism? This can only be answered by a reference to the various influences to which they were exposed, and by a careful inquiry into the best accounts we have of their state at the time of the Roman invasion.

We have seen that, soon after the first occupation of the island, its value was discovered by the Phenicians, who carried on an extensive traffic for tin and other articles. This trade appears to have naturally passed into the hands of their successors, the Carthaginians. It was afterwards taken up by the Greeks, and continued in their possession down to the times of the Romans. We must here observe, that almost all our information relative to this period comes from Roman writers, who could not but have motives to disparage the people whom they intended to enslave. Yet, from their accounts it appears, that in the time of Cæsar an active commercial intercourse existed between this country and the

continent. Cæsar, we are told, was informed that the Gauls had derived considerable assistance from the Britons. How could this have been rendered by rude and uncivilized hordes? He, when in Gaul, collected together "the merchants from all parts," to obtain information respecting Britain; for he says, "Scarcely any but merchants resort to that island." Yet, although Cæsar could obtain no information from those Gallic merchants, they having discrimination enough to perceive that it was not their interest to further his object, the Britons were by them instantly acquainted with his intentions. For, we are told that, "the Britons being informed of his designs by the merchants that resorted to their island, ambassadors from many of their states came to Cæsar, with an offer of hostages and submission."* Does all this extensive and continued commercial intercourse, this prompt reception of information and ready decision in a great political crisis, this sending of ambassadors to a foreign sovereign, exhibit the ancient Britons as "the painted savages" which they are sometimes represented to have been? On the contrary, we should reasonably expect, that a people, maintaining regular commercial relations with the most powerful and most polished nations of the world, would not only retain their original position, but make gradual advances in the arts and sciences, as well as in civil polity: and the account of Cæsar, when fairly considered, proves that they had not greatly degenerated.

There were circumstances, however, which had a tendency to counteract the operation of the beneficial influences to which we have referred. The island was divided into many independent states, which, perhaps, deriving their original limitation and distinctive character from the several families which branched from the original stock, separately partook of the character of clans. This state of society would evidently be unfavourable to general amelioration, as it would tend to isolate the people, and to engender animosity, and even intestine war.

Another circumstance which tended to prevent the intel-

* *De Bello Gallico*, lib. iv., cap. 18, 19.

lectual improvement of the ancient Britons was, the establishment of the feudal system. "These feudal tenures seem to have been derived from a very ancient and primitive origin, and to have existed co-eval with the first plantation of the island. The commandant, or sovereign, would take possession of the lands by the privilege of occupancy. He would then grant them out to his principal officers; assigning to each his particular portion, and obliging them to particular returns for it. Inferior to these, and holding from them as lords in fee, or immediately from the crown, was the great body of the people. And these were divided into two classes. The former were allowed to relinquish their lands or remain on them, at their own discretion; were privileged to buy and sell; and charged with services the most honourable of the menial kind, and all most assuredly determined. The latter were reckoned absolutely the property of the lord, disposable to any one at his will, and saleable as a part of his estate. And these were bound to services the most servile and indeterminate. These were the only two ranks of British citizens,—the nobles and the villains. All below the latter were slaves." * This system, by obliging the barons to render military service to the sovereign, and placing an important class of citizens completely at their disposal, offered almost insuperable obstacles to the progress of civilization, especially in the interior of the country.

Another and yet more important consideration is, the kind of intellectual *caste* which prevailed in the order of the Druids. Their religious doctrine and influence will be hereafter discussed. We now notice the effect of this institution on the general character and intellectual improvement of the people. Ample data are furnished us on this point by Julius Cæsar: his account, although primarily relating to Gaul, will, as the Druid institutions were more perfect and powerful in this island, be equally applicable to Britain:—

"There are only two orders of men in any degree of honour and esteem; for the common people are little better

* WHITAKER'S "History of Manchester," vol. i., p. 350, &c. 8vo. London, 1773.

than slaves, attempt nothing of themselves, and have no share in the public deliberations. The two orders of men with whom, as we have said, all authority and distinctions are lodged, are the nobles and Druids. The Druids preside in matters of religion, have the care of public and private sacrifices, and interpret the will of the gods. They have the direction and education of youth, by whom they are held in great honour. In almost all controversies, whether public or private, the decision is left to them ; and if any crime is committed, any murder perpetrated ; if any dispute arises touching an inheritance, or the limits of adjoining estates ; in all such cases they are the supreme judges. They decree rewards and punishments ; and if any one refuses to submit to their sentence, whether magistrate or private man, they interdict him the sacrifices. This is the greatest punishment that can be inflicted among the Gauls ; because such as are under this prohibition neither can have recourse to law for justice, nor are capable of any public office. The Druids are all under one chief, who possesses the supreme authority in that body. Upon his death, if any one remarkably excels the rest, he succeeds ; but if there are several candidates of equal merit, the affair is determined by a plurality of suffrages. Once a year they assemble at a consecrated place. Hither such as have any suits depending flock from all parts, and submit implicitly to their decrees. Their institution is supposed to come originally from Britain, from whence it passed into Gaul ; and even at this day such as are desirous of being perfect in it travel thither for instruction. The Druids never go to war, are exempted from taxes and military service, and enjoy all manner of immunities. These mighty encouragements induce multitudes of their own accord to follow that profession ; and many are sent by their parents and relations. They are taught to repeat a great number of verses by heart, and often spend twenty years upon this institution ; for it is deemed unlawful to commit their statutes to writing, though in other matters, whether public or private, they use Greek characters. They seem to me to follow this method for two

reasons : To hide their mysteries from the knowledge of the vulgar, and to exercise the memory of their scholars, which would be apt to lie neglected, had they letters to trust to, as we find is often the case. It is one of their principal maxims, that the soul never dies, but after death passes from one body to another ; which, they think, contributes greatly to exalt men's courage, by disarming death of its terrors. They teach, likewise, many things relating to the stars and their motions, the magnitude of the world and our earth, the nature of things, and the power and prerogatives of the immortal gods." *

From this passage we see, that where such an institution prevailed, it must have exercised a powerful control in preventing a people from sinking into barbarism. At the same time, its tendency seems to have been still stronger in retarding general intellectual cultivation. A learned caste was equally calculated to perpetuate knowledge, and to obstruct its universal spread.

On account of the operation of these several influences on a people circumstanced like the ancient Britons, we should be disposed to judge that no general description would meet their case. The Druids, while they taught a refined and complicated theory of religion, instructed their pupils in astronomy, philosophy, geometry, mechanics, rhetoric, and other polite arts. We shall very briefly adduce a few proofs on each of these several particulars.

1. Pomponius Mela confirms the account of Cæsar, with regard to the first particular, astronomy. He says, "They profess to have great knowledge of the motions of the heavens and the stars ;" and the fact that some of their religious solemnities were monthly and some annual, appears to confirm those statements. Pliny says, "They began both their months and years, not from the change, but from the sixth day, of the moon." (Lib. xvi., cap. 44.) Plutarch states, that "the inhabitants of an island" (which, from its situation, can only refer to Britain) "kept every thirtieth

* *De Bello Gallico*, lib. vi., cap. 13, 14.

year a solemn festival in honour of Saturn, when his star enters into the sign of Taurus."

2. In respect of the second, philosophy, Diodorus Siculus says, "They pay the highest honour to their divines and philosophers, who are called Druids." (Lib. v., cap. 31.) Strabo declares, "The Druids add the study of moral philosophy to that of physiology." And Ammianus Marcellinus states, that "the Druids were men of a still more sublime and penetrating spirit, and acquired the highest renown by their speculations, which were at once subtile and profound."

3. Of their geometry Cæsar says, "When any dispute arises about their inheritances, or any controversies about the limits of their fields, they are entirely referred to the decision of the Druids." And in proof that this was not done on mere abstract principles, "both Cæsar and Mela plainly intimate that the Druids were conversant in the most sublime speculations of geometry, in measuring the magnitude of the earth, and even of the world."

4. Their works prove that they were skilled in mechanics. We refer to only one instance,—the erection of those huge cromlechs and tolmêns found in Cornwall and other parts of the West of England, respecting which an eminent antiquary asserts: "These, with all of like structure, may with great probability, I think, though of such stupendous weight, be asserted to be the works of art. It is also plain from their works at Stonehenge, and some of their other monuments, that the Druids had skill enough in the mechanical powers to lift vast weights." *

5. That they were acquainted with rhetoric and other polite arts, is proved by the following testimonies: "According to Diodorus, the Britons paid great regard to their exhortations, not only in the affairs of peace, but even of war. They sometimes step in between two hostile armies, who are standing with their swords drawn, and their spears extended, ready to engage; and by their eloquence, as by an irresistible enchantment, they prevent an effusion of blood. So great are the charms of eloquence and the power of wisdom!"

* DR. BORLASE'S "Antiquities of Cornwall," p. 175. Fol. London, 1769.

And, in confirmation of this statement, Tacitus (in *Vita Agricolæ*) says: "The British chieftains, before a battle, fly from rank to rank, and address their men with animating speeches, tending to inflame their courage, increase their hopes, and dispel their fears."

They must, therefore, be regarded as the depositaries of great and extensive learning, especially if we take into consideration the age in which they lived. The various kings, with the chieftains and nobles, must also have had opportunities of instruction in the schools of the Druids; * while the commercial and agricultural operations, which, as we have seen, were widely extended and long continued, must have led to the introduction of various arts, and produced at least a respectable proportion of power and wealth.

Yet, this being admitted, there appears reason to believe that the more numerous portion of the people were ignorant and poor. Without the means of instruction, their intellectual condition would rather deteriorate than improve; and from their almost entire dependence on the nobles, we can scarcely suppose them to have had the means of procuring more than the ordinary necessities of life. Their condition, therefore, was generally indigent; while their obligation to assist their lord in all his petty wars was calculated to add ferocity to the other features of their degradation.

All the information which we possess respecting the state of the Britons at the period of the Roman invasion, confirms these opinions.

At this time, according to the statements both of Cæsar and of Diodorus, the country was fully inhabited. The latter says, "The island is very populous;" † and the former, "The island is well peopled, full of houses built after the manner of the Gauls, and abounds in cattle." ‡

* These seminaries were generally in connexion with a temple. The greatest of these, it is believed, was in the Isle of Anglesey, near the mansion of the Arch-Druid. Here is a place which is still called *Myfyrion*, or, "the Place of Studies;" another, called *Caer-Edris*, "the City of Astronomers;" and another, *Cerrig-Brudyn*, "the Astronomer's Circle."—HENRY'S "History of England," book i., chap. 2.

† Lib. v., cap. 2.

‡ *De Bello Gallico*, lib. v., cap. 12.

This language, it must be remembered, is employed by persons well acquainted with the densely-populated countries of Italy and Sicily, and is used by them without any qualification.

It is equally clear, that at this date the British chiefs were possessed of considerable wealth. Thus, Cæsar is said to have acquired considerable booty in his two descents on the island. Prasutagus, the king of the Sceni, died possessed of very great wealth. And to a few states in the South, and within a few years after their first subjection, the philosophical Seneca lent more than £480,000 in our money, upon good security, and at exorbitant interest.*

The Britons were also acquainted with the useful arts. The houses in which they dwelt, their chariots of war, as well as a great variety of other works, prove this beyond the possibility of doubt. We notice the latter: "Their cars were admired by the Romans, adopted by individuals for their journeys, and introduced by the public into their races. And we have a picture of one of them, sketched by a British hand, and engraved on a British coin. There we see the charioteer mounted on his carriage before us, a quiver of arrows peeping over his left shoulder, and a spear protended from his left hand, his feet resting upon the pole or foot-board annexed to it, and his body leaning over the horses in the act of accelerating their motion. And we have the description of another in Ossian, equally authentic, very similar in one or two particulars, and more circumstantial. It is the car of a British monarch, bending behind, drawn by a pair of horses, and embossed with sparkling stones. Its beam is of polished yew, its seat of the smoothest bone, and the sides of it are replenished with spears." † Persons who could construct such vehicles, build houses, and make furniture, as well as all the various offensive and defensive weapons of war, must have had no inconsiderable mechanical knowledge and skill.

Perhaps, however, the best means to which we now have

* WHITAKER'S "Manchester." vol. ii., p. 13.

† *Ibid.*, p. 18.

access for ascertaining the relative position that Britain occupied in the scale of nations, is, by considering the measure of resistance it offered to the Roman arms, and the manner in which that power estimated their successes over it.

What in this respect are the simple facts of the case? Julius Cæsar, undoubtedly the first general and one of the greatest men of his age, invaded Britain. He effected a landing by the desperate energy of his soldiers, prompted by the heroism of the standard-bearer of the tenth legion. Yet, after staying a few days on the island, he judged it prudent to quit it suddenly at midnight, assigning as the reason—the approach of the autumnal equinox; as if he was ignorant of this, when he sailed from Gaul! On this scene Dio Cassius observes: “He obtained from it nothing either for himself or his country, but the glory of having fought in it: and as he stated this very strongly, the people of Rome wondered, and extolled him.” His next attempt was made with a formidable army, consisting of thirty thousand of the finest troops in the world, under the ablest officers, and trained in the best possible manner. Yet, although the Britons were defeated in every regular engagement, they evinced in their defensive warfare considerable courage and skill; their fortification of the Thames by stakes remained for many centuries a monument of their knowledge of mechanical power; and the result of this dangerous and expensive invasion was, that Cæsar availed himself of the first overture to make peace, and left the island without building a single fort, or leaving in the country one cohort of Roman troops.

Julius visited Britain no more. And although Augustus, Tiberius, and Caligula had their attention repeatedly directed to this country, and appreciated the importance of its conquest, yet they all avoided the contest. Claudius renewed the war. Aulus Plautius led an army into the island; and, after several successful encounters, Claudius himself came over. Having resided here sixteen days, during which the capital of one of the petty kings was taken, he retired to Italy, where a splendid triumph, with its usual appendages, cele-

brated his conquest of Britain. In this war Vespasian, the future emperor, greatly distinguished himself. He fought thirty battles with the natives, took twenty towns, and was on one occasion rescued from the most imminent danger by the intrepidity of his son Titus. Yet, after all this, the island was unconquered. The Britons still remained undaunted. Even the capture of Caractacus, which produced so much exultation at Rome, did not deter his countrymen from continuing their struggles. Ten years after this loss, the Britons made a new effort to regain their independence under the banners of a woman. But Boadicea failed of success. Suetonius, the Roman governor, was a man equal to the dangers of his position ; and, being invested with the wealth, military power, and superior discipline of the Roman legions, overcame all opposition.

But, after all this waste of treasure and of blood, Britain was not vanquished. Nor would it have been, had not Rome sent, in the person of Agricola, a philosopher as well as a soldier ; one who was capable of pointing out the advantages which would result from the adoption of the superior civilization of Rome, as well as of energetically wielding the terrible power of her arms. It was this that made Britain a Roman province. It is pleasing to contemplate the wisdom of Agricola's liberal mind. He assisted the Britons to build temples, forums, and convenient habitations. He inspired them with a love for education, and persuaded their chiefs to study letters. The Roman dress, language, and literature, spread among the natives. It is also remarkable, that, almost immediately after Britain thus became a part of the Roman empire, the Roman legions here began to support their different commanders in their competitions for the imperial purple, and very generally with success.

Now it is evident that if a people like the ancient Britons, divided into numerous and rival states, could, for nearly a century, resist the arm of Rome when in all her glory ; their internal condition must, at least, have been one of tolerable cultivation. They must have possessed much moral as well as physical power.

CHAPTER II.

THE RELIGION OF THE BRITONS.

WE proceed to consider the important subject, for the illustration of which these preliminary inquiries have been conducted, namely, **THE RELIGION OF THE BRITONS.**

From what has been already said, there exists a strong probability that this religion underwent a considerable alteration during the period which has been just reviewed. It can scarcely be supposed, that the doctrines and principles which were held by the first settlers would be preserved, unalloyed and unaffected, through a period of twelve or fourteen hundred years, during which the inhabitants of this country had maintained considerable commercial intercourse with the Phenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, and Gauls. Such a supposition would be at variance with the entire history of the ancient world. It is very probable that this circumstance affords a key to the discrepancies which are found in the several accounts that are given us, by different writers, of the religion of the ancient Britons.

We will, therefore, in the first place, inquire into the primitive religion of the aborigines of the country.

Had we been utterly destitute of information respecting them, we might have reasonably supposed that the branch of the primitive family which first occupied this island would have brought with them the religion which had been known in the world from the creation. This, being preserved in the family of Noah, must have been carried, to a greater or lesser extent, by the different tribes who left the plains of Shinar at the period of the Dispersion, to the several localities they were destined to inhabit.

The substance of this religion is summed up in the following particulars: A clear and distinct knowledge of the One true and living God, the Creator of the universe; and of

man's responsibility to Him in all things as his rightful Lord and moral Governor ; the history of man's fall by the temptation of the devil ; by which was established the existence of fallen spirits, and man's constant liability to their assaults and temptations ; the appointment of one day in seven as a day of rest, to be kept holy, that is, to be devoted to religious pursuits ; the divine institution of marriage ; a definite idea of good and evil, or what is meant by "doing well, and not doing well," and of the legitimate and inevitable consequences of each ; a distinct apprehension of the immortality of the soul, of a future state of existence, and of the last judgment ; and, withal, a believing expectation of the great Deliverer promised to man under the distinguished name of "the Seed of the woman," whose work was at the same time defined to be "bruising the serpent's head," or destroying the power of Satan ; and, lastly, the offering of sacrifices at stated times, to represent the demerit of sin, that men might be excited to repentance ; and to typify the death by which that promised Deliverer should atone for sin, that men might constantly be reminded of Him in whom they should trust for salvation, and exercise faith.*

This religion, having by the appointment of God been the means of salvation to many of the antediluvian patriarchs, was preserved and taught by Noah ; and no doubt can be entertained, that, for several generations after the Deluge, whilst the recollection of that tremendous judgment was fresh and powerful on the minds of men, they adhered to these truths, and carefully transmitted them to their children.

As we cannot confound the families of Seth or Japheth, whom God had blessed through the patriarch Noah, with Ham and Canaan, who had not only sinned against Him in their treatment of their parent, but whose descendants rebelled against Him at Shinar ; we may reasonably conclude, that when the confusion of tongues scattered these people over the world, they carried with them the same traditions,

* JAMES's "Patriarchal Religion," p. 31.

customs, laws, rituals, rites, and observances; and these generally served as the foundation of their earliest history and religion. Those nations which were insulated by situation or manners from the rest of mankind, retained remains of this primitive knowledge for many ages, and afforded, within the range of authentic history, clear evidence of the scriptural account of the origin of mankind, and of their dispersion from one common centre. To this may be traced all those striking similarities in traditions, doctrines, and rites, that have been discovered to exist in nations situated at the greatest distance from each other, without the assistance of those absurd theories which have been invented for the purpose, and which put in requisition travelling philosophers, or imaginary communication by other means, in ancient times.

We might therefore expect that the religion of the first inhabitants of Britain bore some resemblance to that professed by the Hebrew patriarchs before the giving of the law. An examination of the subject will show that this resemblance is very evident, and in some particulars remarkably striking.*

One of the most important inquiries connected with the religion of any people is concerning the ideas which they have of the Deity, and the attributes with which they believe Him to be invested. On this subject the doctrines of the Druids, as far as they can be ascertained, are most satisfactory. Amongst their names for the supreme God, which they had in use before the introduction of Christianity, were terms which have been literally translated, "God,"

* "The primitive and true religion, conveyed from Shinar to all parts of the habitable globe, assumed almost in every country a different name, in consequence of the difference of language which every where prevailed. Among the ancient Hindoos it was called 'Brachmanism,' and its ministers 'Brachmans;' among the Chaldeans 'wisdom,' and its ministers 'Wise Men;' among the Persians 'Magism,' and its ministers 'Magi;' among the Greeks 'Priesthood,' and its ministers 'Priests;' among the Gauls and ancient Britons 'Druidism,' and its ministers 'Druids;'—all synonymous terms, implying 'wisdom and wise men,' 'priesthood and priests.'"—JAMES'S "Patriarchal Religion," p. 34.

“Distributor,” “Governor,” “the Mysterious One,” “the Eternal,” “He that pervadeth all things,” “the Author of existence,” “the Ancient of Days.” These expressive appellations sufficiently indicate their views of the moral character and attributes of God. The opinion of the Druids as to the nature of God is comprehensively explained by the following bold and remarkable aphorism : “NID DIM OND DUW, NID DUW OND DIM.” It defies translation so as to convey its force and beauty ; but William Owen has furnished a version sufficiently plain to convey the idea : “God cannot be matter ; what is not matter must be God.” * These were the attributes of the God of the early Druids. They believed that the Deity was the source of life, and the giver of good ; they defined His duration as eternal, and ascribed to Him omnipotence as the measure of His power.† And as they found nothing, in the animal creation or in man, which had any proportion or resemblance to God, they had neither statues nor pictures to represent Him. From which we infer, that they regarded God as a pure spirit, as disengaged from matter as He was exalted above all resemblance to created things.‡ Numerous Triads attest and illustrate this branch of the subject :—

“I. There are three primary UNITIES, and more than one of each cannot exist : one God, one Truth, and one point of Liberty ; and this is where all opposites equally equiponderate.

“II. *Three things of which God necessarily consists* : the greatest life, the greatest knowledge, and the greatest power ; and of what is greatest there can be no more than one of any thing.

“III. Three things it is impossible God should not be : whatever perfect goodness should be ; whatever perfect goodness would desire to be ; and whatever perfect goodness is able to perform.

“IV. Three things evince what God has done, and will

* JAMES’S “Patriarchal Religion,” p. 46.

† “Identity of Religions called Druidical and Hebrew,” p. 6.

‡ *La Religion des Gaulois*, vol. i., p. 62.

do : infinite power, infinite wisdom, and infinite love ; for there is nothing that these attributes want of power, of knowledge, or of will to perform.

“ V. Three things it is impossible God should not perform : what is most beneficial, what is most wanted, and what is most beautiful of all things.

“ VI. The three grand attributes of God : infinite plenitude of life, infinite knowledge, and infinite power.

“ VII. Three things that none but God can do : to endure the eternities of the circle of infinity, to participate of every state of existence without changing, and to reform and renovate every thing without causing the loss of it.

“ VIII. Three causes that have produced rational beings : divine love possessed of perfect knowledge, divine wisdom knowing all possible means, and divine power possessed by the joint will of divine love and divine wisdom.” *

The first inhabitants of Britain also believed in the immortality of the soul. There is abundant evidence that the Druids taught this doctrine ; and Mela tells us, that this was one of their secret doctrines which they permitted to be published for political reasons : “ There is one thing which they teach their disciples, which hath been made known to the common people, in order to render them more brave and fearless ; namely, that souls are immortal, and that there is another life after the present.” † They also appear to have associated with this opinion some knowledge of future retribution, as the following passages, taken from their remains, serve to show :—“ In this state of probation the soul becomes possessed of such perfection of memory, that in whatever condition man may afterwards exist, he will never lose the recollection of whatever subsequently befalls him. So that the reward or punishment is by this means extremely heightened, by comparing the present with the former state, and experiencing the necessary consequences of good or evil.” ‡ “ In all antiquity, the ancient Britons were cele-

* Theological Triads.

† DR. HENRY'S “ History of Great Britain,” vol. i., p. 112.

‡ JAMES'S “ Patriarchal Religion,” p. 52.

brated for the knowledge of this doctrine. For whilst other nations fluctuated between hope and despair as to a future state of being, the Britons maintained it with a firmness that does them much honour. This was the great principle of their religion, and was equally known and influential in all the various grades of society." *

This people also had correct views of moral good and evil. Two or three Triads will be sufficient evidence on this point:—

"The three primary principles of wisdom:—Obedience to the laws of God, concern for the welfare of mankind, and suffering with fortitude all the accidents of life."

"The three great laws of man's actions:—What he forbids in another, what he requires from another, and what he cares not how it is done by another."

"The three great ends of knowledge:—Duty, utility, decorum."

"Three things corrupt the world:—Pride, superfluity, and indolence."

"There are three things which God will not love him that delights to look at:—Fighting, a monster, and the pomp of pride."

They also offered sacrifices, and observed particular days for religious worship. Their sacrifices were carefully selected, and they appear to have had clear views of their propitiatory character. Pliny, describing the gathering of the mistletoe, observes: "After they have well and duly prepared their festival cheer under the tree, they bring thither two young bullocks, milk-white, such as never drew in yoke at plough or wain, and whose heads were then, and not before, bound by the horns; which done, the priest, arrayed in a white vesture, climbeth up into the tree, and, with a golden hook or bill, cutteth it off, and they beneath receive it in a white cassock or coat of arms. Then they fall to kill the beasts aforesaid for sacrifice, praying devoutly, that it would please God to bless this gift of His to the good and

* BORLASE'S "Antiquities of Cornwall," p. 101.

benefit of all those to whom He had vouchsafed to give it." * These sacrifices were offered with very solemn rites, the common people remaining at a distance, while the priests approached with trembling awe the bloody victims, which were sometimes carried round the omen fire.†

Their religious services were held at certain stated times. That connected with the cutting of the sacred mistletoe, mentioned above, was kept on the sixth day of the moon; and, as nearly as this would allow, on the tenth day of March, which was their New-Year's-Day.‡ The first day of May was also a great annual festival. On this day, in later times, adorations were offered to the sun, under the title of "Belinus." The Druids measured their time by lunar months, calculating neither from the change nor from the full, but from the sixth day of one moon to the same day of the next; and the first day of this lunar month (the sixth of ours) was a sacred day. They were also well acquainted with the division of time into weeks.§ This circumstance is not only affirmed by several writers of unquestionable veracity, but is also attested by the language and customs of the aborigines of Britain. Following the mode of computation adopted by Moses, in his account of the creation, the ancient Britons called their week, as do their descendants at this day in the Principality, *wyth-nos*, "eight-nights," and their fortnight, *pythrew-nos*, "fifteen-nights." This is a remarkable circumstance, and shows how closely the Britons adhered to the customs that had been handed down to them by Noah and his sons.||

There is no branch of this subject which presents itself in a more interesting aspect than that which relates to the sacred places of this people, and the peculiar manner of their worship. They worshipped in the open air; it being a maxim with them, that it was unlawful to build temples to

* PLINII *Nat. Hist.*, lib. xvi., cap. 44.

† BORLASE'S "Antiquities," p. 124; DAVIES'S "Mythology of British Druids," pp. 376-383.

‡ DR. HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. i., p. 116.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

|| JAMES'S "Patriarchal Religion," p. 55.

the gods, or to worship them within walls and under roofs.* Their favourite place was a grove of oaks, or the shelter of a majestic tree of this kind. Here they would erect stone pillars in one or two circular rows; and in some of their principal temples, as particularly that of Stonehenge, they laid stones of prodigious weight on the tops of those perpendicular pillars, which formed a kind of circle aloft in the air. Near to these temples they constructed their sacred mounts, their cromlechs or stone tables for their sacrifices, and every other necessary provision for their worship. These sacred places were generally situated in the centre of some thick wood or grove, watered by a consecrated river or fountain, and surrounded by a ditch or mound, to prevent the intrusion of improper persons.

Nothing can more clearly prove the extreme antiquity of this worship than the above-mentioned particulars. It appears evident, that in the earliest ages all the places of worship had some reference to the Paradise from which the first pair were driven, in consequence of their sin. Hence, we find everywhere, in the description of the first sacred places, some allusions to the scene of man's temptation and fall: a garden or grove, with one or two trees in the midst, watered by a river, or different branches of a river, and enclosed to prevent unhallowed intrusion.† This was evidently the case with our ancestors. We will, however, only glance at the remarkable similarity which the practices of the Hebrew patriarchs bore to those of our forefathers.

It is well known that "Abraham planted a grove in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God." (Gen. xxi. 33.) "The Lord God appeared to Abraham by the oak of Moreh."‡ The same practice continued: Jacob buried his dead beneath an oak; (Gen. xxxv. 8;) and Joshua "took a great stone, and set it up under an

* TACITUS, *De Moribus Germaniæ*, cap. xix.

† BRYDGES'S "Testimony of Profane Antiquity," *passim*.

‡ "The word עֵץ should be translated 'oak,' and not 'plain,' as it is in our version. See Gen. xii. 6."—"Identity of Religions called Druidical and Hebrew," p. 10. 8vo. London, 1829.

oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord." (Joshua xxiv. 26.) These passages prove that the early Hebrews had special reference to groves, and more particularly to oaks, in the selection of their sacred places. They also raised stone pillars for special purposes, in connexion with them. See the entire account of Jacob's conduct at Bethel; (Gen. xxviii. 18, 19;) and observe the similar conduct of Moses: "And Moses rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel." (Exod. xxiv. 4.) The mode in which these circular temples were erected, may be fully gathered from other parts of the Pentateuch. (Deut. xxvii. 2, &c.) An altar of more than one stone, probably of three, was erected, and round it other stones were raised, which had never been touched by tools, except such as were absolutely necessary for procuring them. See this further exemplified at Gilgal. (Joshua iv. 3-9, 20.) Here, also, twelve stones were set up, and an altar was built; and it was here that the people assembled to celebrate their great festivals.*

In a similar way did our ancestors in Britain worship at this very time. Deriving their knowledge of divine things, and all their ideas of sacred places, from the same source,—the great postdiluvian family, they set up pillars of rough stone to mark out the places sacred to solemn worship, and also to point out the resting-place of their departed friends. This practice, having been abused to idolatrous uses, was prohibited to the Jews by divine command. (Lev. xxvi. 1.) As all our information refers to later periods of their history, we know but little of the manner of worship which was customary among the primitive inhabitants of this country; except that it is very evident they offered sacrifices, and accompanied the oblation with solemn prayers.

These particulars will be sufficient to prove, that the first inhabitants of our island brought with them the religion of Noah and Abraham. They knew and worshipped the one

* "Identity of Religions," p. 17.

living and true God, as He was revealed to the patriarchs. And this was continued, subject to various alterations and additions, through many ages. It would be very interesting and instructive, to follow the history of these additions and corruptions; but our means of information are too scanty for the purpose, and compel us to confine our attention to some of the most prominent particulars.

The first remarkable feature in the religion of the Britons, which appears to be an evident departure from the simple patriarchal religion, is the appointment of the Druids as an established priesthood.

In the earliest ages the head of the family offered sacrifice, and conducted the religious services of the household. This appears to have been the case with the descendants of Abraham, until the giving of the law. Yet in other nations certain persons were selected and formally appointed to this sacred office. The occasion of this, and the manner of its institution, are subjects veiled in deep obscurity. We know that there was a regular order of priests in Egypt before the time of Joseph. The magi of Persia, and the priests of Greece, were also in existence in very remote antiquity. And probably this creation of a new order of priests took place everywhere, as we have reason to believe it did among the Romans. It is stated, that although there existed among that people family priests, Romulus and Numa appointed several others to conduct the public religious services of the city of Rome, and of the smaller cities of the empire.* From this account it may be surmised, that when cities were built, and various tribes became merged in one population, the old patriarchal custom of each father of a family conducting the religious services was considered inapplicable to the new circumstances of the community, and priests were appointed to supply this public want.†

* DIONYSIUS HALICARNASSENSIS, lib. ii., cap. 22; LIVIUS, lib. i., cap. 20.

† Notwithstanding the appointment of these public priests, the heads of families for a long time afterward acted as patriarchal priests. See a striking instance of this in the case of Caius Fabius. (LIVIUS, lib. v., cap.

Such, in all probability, was the case in Britain. When the aborigines had settled down in possession of the country, it became necessary to make some other provision for the maintenance of divine worship than that which was previously in use ; and persons were appointed to take public charge of the religious ordinances, and of everything pertaining thereto. There are no means of ascertaining when this took place. All knowledge respecting it is lost in the extreme antiquity of the period. Those who have profoundly studied the subject incline to the belief, that the Druids were celebrated for their learning and antiquity at the time of Pythagoras, who lived B.C. 600 : * at the period of the Roman invasion no light could be cast on their origin.

Before we proceed to consider the influence which the Druids exercised on the national religion, it will be proper to notice one remarkable circumstance in which they differed from the priesthood of the most prominent nations on the continent. In the ample information which we possess of the religion of Greece and Rome, we hear nothing of any class of priests or teachers, whose duty it was to give the people information respecting the nature and principles of religion. Of preaching there is not the slightest trace. Religion with them was a thing handed down by tradition from father to son, and consisted in the proper performance of certain rites and ceremonies. It was respecting these external forms of worship alone that the pontiffs were obliged to give instruction to those who consulted them.†

Now this was certainly not the case with the British Druids. They were the instructors of the people, as well as their priests. They taught, to some considerable extent, the sciences and polite learning : nor was religious knowledge, properly so called, neglected. Cæsar assures us that they taught their disciples many things about the nature and

46.) Yet the king, as the great father, for many ages continued to be the principal priest.

* BORLASE'S "Antiquities of Cornwall," p. 73.

† DR. WILLIAM SMITH'S "Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities,"
v. *Sacerdos*. 8vo. London, 1842.

perfections of God ; * and it is equally true that they instructed the people that the soul is immortal, and insisted on the certainty of another life after the present. It is also distinctly stated, that this latter doctrine was so clearly taught and so generally known, that it affected the national character, and made the people more brave and fearless.† It is said that they embodied their maxims and precepts in poetic triplets, and that these extended to twenty thousand verses. In committing them to memory, and in obtaining an understanding of their meaning, their disciples sometimes spent twenty years.

It therefore appears very evident, that, notwithstanding the Druids, for the promotion of their order and the strengthening of their influence, might often lay claim to, and exercise, unreasonable and arbitrary powers ; and although they might, and (as we shall soon show) certainly did, associate various corruptions with their primitive faith ; nevertheless, they maintained in Britain a religion which, for its purity and influence on the public mind, was, there is great reason to believe, unequalled in any part of the Gentile world at the time of the Roman invasion. We shall indeed be better prepared to remark on this point, when we have considered the state of religion in Britain at the close of the period which at present claims our attention ; and we therefore proceed to notice, as far as our slender information will enable us, the probable effects produced on the religion of Britain by the commercial intercourse which subsisted between this island and other countries. We shall then conclude this part of the subject by giving some account of the state of religion when Cæsar visited our shores.

It has been already shown, that the Phenicians carried on an important trade with the south-western peninsula of this country for a very considerable period. Hence it has been surmised, that the religious institutions of Britain were copied from this people. We certainly do not find such results follow commercial intercourse at the present day.

* *De Bello Gallico*, lib. vi., cap. 13.

† HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. i., p. 102.

The Dutch and Portuguese have traded with India, and our own countrymen with China, for a long time, and to a great extent ; yet little has been done to influence the faith of these countries, or to imbue their inhabitants with our holy religion ; and while it is freely admitted that the religions of the early ages did not offer such obstacles to alteration or addition as are now presented, it does still seem very unlikely that an entire revolution should have been wrought in the religious system of any people by such means, although some partial alterations and additions might result from them.

Among all the names of the Deity in use among the eastern nations, we find none so common as that of Baal. This term in the East was, like that of Jupiter in the West, the general appellation of their gods. Yet the Deity was worshipped under this name among the Druids. On the eve of May-day, fires were lit on their altars and cairns, in honour of Bel or Baal ; and in later times, when the Druids had fallen from their primitive purity of manners, this term became a title of Phœbus, Apollo, or the Sun. It is difficult to say whether the Britons derived this name from the Phenicians, or obtained it through their own ancestors from the East. There can be no doubt that the term itself was in early times applied to the true God ; * but having been associated with idolatrous worship, it was forbidden to be used in reference to Jehovah. It is probable, therefore, that the Druids obtained some knowledge of the profane application of this name from their Phenician visitors. Hence we find the great festival of Bel or Baal celebrated on the last day of April, and the fires which then flamed on the altars called *Bealtine*, or “the fires of Baal.”†

Another Phenician deity was Hercules. He was not only worshipped in Phenicia, but was also known and revered by the Druids. As this will serve to show that the religion of this remarkable people was at least in some measure affected

* See Hosea ii. 16.

† MAURICE'S “Indian Aniquities,” vol. vi., p. 24 ; “Identity of Religions,” p. 26 ; SIR WILLIAM B. THAM'S “The Gael and the Cymbri,” p. 226.

by their intercourse with the Phenicians, and as the entire account is curious, we give it at length. Hercules or, as he was called by the Druids, "Ogmios was worshipped in Gaul and Britain. The word *Ogmios* signifies 'the power of eloquence.' He was esteemed and worshipped by them with great devotion, as the patron of orators and the god of eloquence. They painted him as an old man, surrounded by a great multitude of people with slender chains reaching from his tongue to their ears. The people seemed to be pleased with their captivity, and discovered no inclination to break their chains. Lucian (from whom we have this account) expressing his surprise at this picture, it was thus explained to him by a Druid: 'You will cease to be surprised, when I tell you, that we make Hercules (whom we call Ogmios) the god of eloquence, contrary to the Greeks, who give that honour to Mercury, who is so far inferior to him in strength. We represent him as an old man, who holds so many people fast by the tongue. Neither do we think it any affront to Hercules to have his tongue bored, since, to tell you all in one word, it was that which made him succeed in every thing, and it was by his eloquence that he subdued the hearts of all.'"* "We are of opinion, that Hercules accomplished all his achievements by speech: and, having been a wise man, he conquered mostly by persuasion. We think his arrows were keen razors, easily shot, and penetrating the souls of men; whence you have among you the expression of 'winged words.'"+ We have been the more particular on this point, as it is important to show the view in which the Druids regarded those personifications which have been considered as their inferior deities. It is, however, sufficiently apparent that their information respecting Hercules was derived from Phenicia, and that this hero-deity, as above stated, was known to the Druids. The altar discovered at Colchester in Essex, already mentioned, is decisive on this point.‡

* DR. HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. i., p. 278.

† SIR W. BETHAM'S "The Gael and the Cymbri," p. 94.

‡ SIR WILLIAM BETHAM'S "The Gael and the Cymbri," p. 96;

With respect to any influence which Grecian intercourse might have exerted on the religion of the Britons, we possess no information. There are no remaining monuments, nor any other evidence on which reliance can be placed. Much has indeed been said respecting the great number of Greek words found in the language of the ancient Britons, a long list of which has been given by Samnes and other writers.* It has been supposed that even the term *Druid* is derived from this language, *δρῦς*, *drus*, in Greek signifying "an oak." But it will at once be evident that no dependence can be placed on this, when it is known that *deur* in the ancient British tongue has the same signification.† But although the prevalent use of Greek terms may afford evidence of some connexion or intercourse having existed between the two countries, it casts no light on the effect which this produced on the religion of the Druids.

Before we proceed to sketch the state of religion in England at the time of the Roman invasion, it will be necessary to notice the fact so explicitly mentioned by Cæsar, that at this period the eastern coasts were peopled with Belgæ from the continent, who retained the manners and even the names of the different parts of the country from which they had emigrated. Although there were Druids in Gaul, and in all probability among these settlers; yet, as Cæsar explicitly intimates their great inferiority to the British Druids, it will be very necessary to guard against applying any part of the character of one people to that of the other.‡ It will, in addition, be important to remember, that Cæsar, Diodorus Strabo, and others who write occa-

SAMNES'S *Britannia antiqua illustrata*, pp. 141–143; FABER'S "Origin of Pagan Idolatry," &c., vol. ii., pp. 382–384. 4to. *Query*, Did the Druids derive the practice of human sacrifices from the Phenicians? See BORLASE'S "Antiquities," p. 64.

* SAMNES'S *Brit. antiq. illust.*, pp. 85–87.

† "Ancient Universal History," vol. xvii., 8vo., p. 44; BORLASE'S "Antiquities," p. 67.

‡ *De Bello Gallico*, lib. iv., cap. 13. "Their institution is supposed to come originally from Britain, whence it passed into Gaul; and even at this day such as are desirous of being perfect in it, travel thither for instruction."

sional notices of the religion of Britain, speak of the gods of this people conformably to their own ideas : that is, whenever they observed in any of those deities an attribute or symbol resembling some of their own divinities, they always gave them the same names. When, therefore, we read in their writings of the worship of Mercury, Apollo, Jupiter, or others, it must not be taken for granted that the Druids had adopted the entire mythology of these gods, as it had been received in Greece and Rome ; but simply, that in their worship they referred to persons or descriptions of deities, who were distinguished by attributes similar to those of the gods of these nations.*

It has been a question much debated amongst antiquaries, whether the Druids maintained that there was but one God, or had fallen into the common error of other Gentile nations, and worshipped a great number of deities. Origen has been quoted as express evidence in favour of the former opinion ; and the testimony of Cæsar and others has been cited to support the latter. It is very probable that neither of these assumptions can be fully maintained.

That the Druids in the earliest ages of their history had clear and correct views of the divine unity, nature, and attributes, has been already shown, and might be abundantly confirmed. An eminent French author observes on this point : “ There are very strong reasons to believe that they at first only recognised one Supreme Being, whom they never dared to represent, and whom they called Hesus.” † That they maintained these doctrines in all their perfect purity, can scarcely be supposed : while it appears evident that they had not, at least generally in Britain, sunk into

* BANIER’S “Mythology,” vol. iii., chap. 211. 8vo. London, 1739. “Hence we are told, that Lucian, in one of his Dialogues, makes Mercury say, that he knows not what course to take in inviting those gods to the assembly of the others, because, being unacquainted with their language, he could neither understand them, nor make them understand him ;” (*ibid.* ;) language which clearly shows that, notwithstanding they were often called by the same names, the objects of Druid worship were totally dissimilar to the gods of Greece and Rome.

† *La Religion des Gaulois*, tom. i., p. 62.

the actual polytheism of Greece and Rome. As this is a most important point, we shall endeavour to state our views respecting it as clearly as possible.

It appears that the Druids still retained a knowledge of the divine unity, as a doctrine; but that, in the later periods of their history, it did not make a prominent feature in their public teaching. The Druids, as well as the Gymnosophists of India, the Magi of Persia, the Chaldeans of Assyria, and all the other priests of antiquity, had two sets of religious doctrines and opinions. The one of these systems they communicated only to the initiated, who were admitted into their own order, and at their admission were solemnly sworn to keep that system of doctrines a profound secret from the rest of mankind.* Cæsar attributes their careful avoidance of committing any part of their teaching to writing, to this determination to preserve a part of their doctrines from the knowledge of the vulgar.† It appears at least a probable conjecture, that this prevalent practice originated in all these countries from the operation of the same principles,—the gradual corruption of the pure patriarchal faith, the determined maintenance of a priestly caste in great honour and authority, and the consequent policy of affecting the minds of the ignorant by imposing appearances, rites, and ceremonies. This supposition affords a solution of those facts which every where meet us in remote antiquity, and is at the same time in precise accordance with what we have seen of human nature, under similar circumstances, in modern days.

As, therefore, the Brahmins of India were sworn to keep secret the doctrine, “that there is one God, the Creator of heaven and earth;” ‡ so the Druids, although they retained a full knowledge and belief of this important tenet, may have reserved the communication of it to the members of their own order, and have countenanced in their public teaching, in condescension to the capacities of the vulgar, the opinion that the

* DR. HENRY’S “History of Great Britain,” vol. i., p. 99.

† *De Bello Gallico*, lib. vi., cap. 13.

‡ DR. HENRY’S “History of Great Britain,” vol. i., p. 102.

several powers and attributes of Deity might be regarded as so many separate existences, and be revered as such. The learned French author to whom we have already referred makes the following remark : “ They degenerated, they fell from the nobleness of their former sentiments : they insensibly lost those sublime views of Deity, and by degrees adapted their opinion to the model of the Greeks and Romans.” *

The Druids, in the earliest ages of their history, worshipped the supreme God under the name of *Hesus*, a word expressive of His attribute of omnipotence ; but they afterward applied this appellation to the Divine Being, as the great Ruler of events, and the Almighty Disposer of all earthly governments and powers. In consequence, therefore, of the Deity having been implored under this distinctive name to exert His power for the defence of the suppliants, and to give success to their cause, the common people came at length to regard the Almighty Disposer of events as a separate Divinity ; and the Romans thought that the Druids adored Him as the god of war, and as similar to their Mars.

Nothing can more clearly prove the accuracy of our opinion on this point than a reference to a preceding page.† We have seen that the Druids regarded Hercules as the patron of eloquence, arts, and commerce ; yet Cæsar, guided by those attributes, perhaps ignorant of the name by which the possessor of them was designated, and influenced by the Roman mythology, says, “ Mercury is the chief deity with them. Of him they have many images ; and they account him the inventor of all arts, their guide and conductor in their journeys, and the patron of merchandise and gain.” ‡ Here we clearly perceive, that he gives the name according to the doctrines of his own religion, while in every other particular his account strikingly corresponds with that of Lucian, who had the opportunity of obtaining correct information by personal conversation with a Druid.

* *La Religion des Gaulois*, p. 62, and liv. i., chap. vi., *passim*.

† Page 47.

‡ *De Bello Gallico*, lib. vi., cap. 15.

In the same manner Teutates, which, was at first a name or attribute of deity, came to be regarded as the god of the infernal world. The sun, moon, and stars, fountains, rivers, rocks, and woods, are also said to have obtained a measure of adoration. However doubtful this may be in respect of a few of these particulars, it seems certain that the sun was regarded with something like divine honour, and that the perpetual fires which were kept burning on their altars had a direct reference to the appearance and influence of this luminary.

We are well aware that accounts very different from this have been given of the objects worshipped by the Druids; but, guided as we are by the cautionary remarks with which a consideration of this subject was commenced, it does not appear to us that the Druids are clearly chargeable with that gross idolatry which some writers have attempted to fasten upon them.

These views are further sustained by the fact, that the British Druids had no images among them; although their brethren on the continent, who were more immediately placed under a larger amount of corrupting influence, had proceeded even to this extent. It is true, that it has been said, they regarded a cube as symbolical of truth; because, when turned every way, it presented the same appearance. But it was contrary to the principles of the Celtic religion to represent any gods by the human figure: according to ancient tradition, the Druids justly conceived, that the divine power was to be worshipped, not seen.*

Yet, although they had not progressed so far towards idolatry as to represent the Deity by any exhibitions of the human figure, they evidently regarded the oak with very superstitious veneration. The manner in which this was done appears, however, to show that even when the Britons had begun to attach ideas of personality to the divine attributes, they did not fully relinquish the doctrine of the divine unity. Hence, we are told, that "the manner in which the prin-

* BORLASE'S "Antiquities of Cornwall," p. 109.

cial tree of the grove was consecrated, was as follows : The Druids, with the general consent of the whole order, and all the neighbourhood, pitched upon the most beautiful tree, cut off all its side-branches, and then joined two of them to the higher side of the trunk, so that they extended themselves on either side like the arms of a man, making in the whole the shape of the cross. Above the insertions of these branches, and below, they inscribed in the bark of the tree the word *Thau*, by which they meant 'God.' On the right arm was inscribed *Hesus*, on the left *Belenus*, and on the trunk *Tharamis*. Under this tree they performed their most sacred rites." * Thus, while they were evidently verging toward the adoption of sensible representations of the Divine Being, we find three of the principal attributes (or, as they have been called, "deities") united together as parts of one individual personality.

In a consideration of Druidical theology, it is also important to observe that we have no evidence of their having sunk into fatalism, as the greater part of even the most cultivated Gentile nations had done at that period. On the contrary, they seem to have fully believed, and clearly taught, the doctrine of a Divine superintending Providence ; that the various affairs of this world were known to God, and immediately under His government. They therefore worshipped Him as the sovereign Disposer of all things.† Uniting these principles with the steadfast adherence of the Druids to the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, and of the certainty of a future state of existence, which have been already considered, we shall be able to form some idea of their religious opinions. In speaking of a whole nation so divided into sections, and surrounded by foreign settlers, as were the ancient Britons, and withal concealed from us by the veil of remote antiquity, it will always be impossible to reconcile every statement, and to harmonize every record and tradition. We think, however, it may be safely said, that whatever views some of the Belgæ, or even Britons,

* BORLASE'S "Antiquities of Cornwall," p. 108.

† This is supported both by Tacitus and Pliny.

might have entertained on minor points ; however some of them might have more rapidly incorporated foreign corruptions with their ancient faith ; there does appear sufficient reason for believing that the doctrines above stated were held and taught by the Druids ; and, if so, although they might, and perhaps did, entertain a variety of mistaken and superstitious notions ; yet these could not destroy the effect of the great truths referred to, while they were held firm in the public mind. These principles must have maintained, in all who believed them, the moral and spiritual dignity of human nature, and have saved them from brutal ignorance and savage barbarism.

The worship of the Druids next claims our attention. We are told, that the great ends which they had in view in the performance of this duty, were these four :—To express their admiration of the perfections of God, and gratitude for His favours ; to obtain from Him such things as they wanted and desired ; to appease His anger, and engage His love ; and to discover His designs and counsels with regard to future events. In consequence of this, their acts of religious worship were also of four kinds, and consisted of songs of praise and thanksgiving, prayers and supplications, offerings and sacrifices, and the various rites of augury and divination.*

The antiquity of poetry, and its early consecration to divine worship, are well known. The use of sacred hymns appears to have been as universal as it was ancient. Among the first Britons it occupied a prominent position. Accustomed, as they were, to reduce all their knowledge to verse, it might be expected that some of their poetry would be adapted to their worship, and be used on solemn occasions. Yet none of these sacred songs have been preserved to our day. Not having been committed to writing, and living only in the memories of the Druids, they are lost.†

* DR. HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," p. 109.

† Although we have none of the poetry which may have been used in their worship, there are many specimens of ancient Bardic verse in existence. "The most ancient metre employed by the Druids is supposed to be that which is now generally termed 'The Warrior's Triplet : ' it is a stanza com-

Another part of this worship consisted of prayers and supplications. This is a very important consideration : for, although it does not of itself prove any thing as to the character and attributes of the Deity, to whom they were addressed, yet the practice of prayer in public worship serves to show, that all sense of dependence on God, and trust in His mercy, were not buried beneath a mass of superstitious ceremonies.

posed of three lines, each line consisting of seven syllables, and rhyming in the last. In the first two lines the Druid described some objects that were visible in nature, or actions that were well known to every one; and, in the third, introduced some precepts of morality. The following is a translation of a few of these verses :—

‘ Snow a robe o’er hamlets flings :
In the wood the raven sings.
Too much sleep no profit brings.

‘ See the forest white with snows !
Hark ! the storm of winter blows.
Nature beyond learning goes.

‘ Fair the moon’s resplendent bow,
Shining o’er the mountain snow.
Peace the wicked never know.

‘ ‘Mid the snow, green woodbines rise :
All are bound by nature’s ties.
Anger dwells not with the wise.’ ”

—JAMES’S “ Patriarchal Religion,” p. 66.

As the following passage can scarcely refer to any island but Britain, it, in all probability, (as far as the information of the writer extended,) describes the worship of the Druids at Stonehenge : “ Hecatæus and some other ancient writers report, that there is an island about the bigness of Sicily, situated in the ocean, opposite to the northern coast of Celtica, (Gaul,) inhabited by a people called ‘ Hyperboreans,’ because they are ‘ beyond the north wind.’ The climate is excellent, and the soil is fertile, yielding double crops. The inhabitants are great worshippers of Apollo, (the sun,) to whom they sing many, many hymns. To this god they have consecrated a large territory, in the midst of which they have a magnificent round temple, replenished with the richest offerings. Their very city is dedicated to him, and is full of musicians and players on various instruments, who every day celebrate his benefits and perfections.” —DIODORUS SICULUS, as quoted by DR. HENRY, in his “ History of Great Britain,” vol. i., p. 110.

These prayers were commonly presented by a priest, appointed for that purpose; who prayed, holding his hand upon the head of the sacrificial victim before it was killed. Pliny acquaints us with the substance of one of these prayers, which were usually offered up by a Druid at one of their most solemn sacrifices: "Which done, they begin to offer their sacrifices, and to pray to God to give a blessing with His own gift to them that were honoured with it." *

It is certain that sacrifices were instituted in the first ages of the world; they were even known in the primitive family, and were practised throughout the patriarchal dispensation. They were, indeed, a principal part of that economy, and were evidently intended to answer these important purposes: 1. By the slaying of the victim, to exemplify the death which had been denounced against man's disobedience; 2. To exhibit, by this means, an awful lesson of that death which was the wages of sin; and, 3. To represent that death which was to be undergone by the Saviour of the world.† Hereby were connected, in one view, the two cardinal events in the history of man,—the FALL, and the RECOVERY; the death denounced against sin, and the death appointed for that Holy One, who was to lay down His life to deliver man from the consequences of transgression. That these views were known and recognised when animal sacrifices were first instituted, there can be little doubt; but it is beyond all question that the practice of this rite was continued long after these correct principles had been obliterated from the mind. It is therefore difficult, from the usage itself, to say what were the precise views entertained by the Druids respecting their sacrificial offerings; although we shall find some reasons for believing that they had not quite lost sight of their original design. We have abundant evidence that, on these occasions, oxen, sheep, goats, and other animals, were offered. The priests first prayed, then the victim was slain, having been ritually devoted, the *mola salsa*, wine, and frankincense attending;

* PLINII *Nat. Hist.*, lib. xvi., cap. 44.

† DR. MAGEE *On Atonement and Sacrifice*, vol. i., p. 51. 8vo. London, 1816.

then followed the libation, and prayers succeeded, the blood was poured out, and what was to be burnt was placed on the fire-altar. Sacrifice was never performed without a Druid, who, on these solemn occasions, always appeared dressed in white. The victims were examined by the Druids with great care, to see that they were the most perfect and beautiful of their several kinds ; after which they were slain, as before stated. Sometimes they were consumed entirely by fire upon the altar ; but more commonly they were divided into three parts, one of which was consumed upon the altar, another fell to the share of the priest who officiated, and upon the third the person who brought the sacrifice feasted with his friends.*

It has been asserted, on the authority of Cæsar and others, that human victims were frequently sacrificed on Druid altars. This fearful charge has been generally admitted by British antiquarians ; while a few have laboured to show, that the passages which contain those allegations refer to the punishment of convicted criminals. Into this controversy we cannot enter : we must be satisfied with saying that, however great the enormity of this practice may be to us,—and nothing can make it seem greater than it really is,—yet we find that it was practised in every part of the ancient world. It is also indisputable, that those authorities on which we are on other points obliged to depend, state, that human victims were frequently immolated, and that, when criminals were not procurable, innocent persons were sacrificed. The consequence, then, appears plain, that, on certain occasions of great and pressing moment, innocent individuals were offered up on the altar. It has been said, with great confidence, that “the custom of sacrificing the innocent was never known in primitive Britain.” We believe this is true ; yet, after the Britons had been in contact and correspondence with Phenicia, Carthage, Greece, Gaul, and Rome,—all which nations had occasionally practised this inhuman enormity,—the opinion that it was not afterwards introduced

* DR. HENRY’S “History of Great Britain,” vol. i., p. 112.

among them does not appear to be tenable, in direct opposition to the testimony of Cæsar. Indeed, if the sons and daughters of Achan were stoned with stones, and burned with fire, (Joshua vii. 24, 25,) under the immediate command of Joshua, we need not be incredulous when we are told that the Druids sometimes sacrificed innocent persons. Besides, it is evident, that some of the acknowledged doctrines of the Druids had, in times of great national peril, a tendency to lead to this barbarous conduct. For instance, it is well known that they taught, that "nothing but the life of man could be accepted by the gods as a redemption for the life of man." They also carried their belief of the immortality of the soul to such an extent, that they are said to have sometimes deferred the settlement of their accounts, in the confidence that they could arrange them in a future state of being.* Such notions could only exist among those who were fully persuaded that they should after death have perfect knowledge of the affairs of this life, and enter upon a state of being which would bear some analogy to the present. Consequently, the value of life would decrease in their estimation just in proportion to their conviction that this would be the case. Thus, from a corruption of the most important truth, the greatest practical evils might have resulted. Yet, at the same time that we express this opinion as to the probable occasional sacrifice of human life by the Druids, we think it very evident that it has been most unreasonably magnified; and this exaggeration has contributed to place the ancient Britons far below the relative position in civilization which they were entitled to occupy among the contemporary nations of the world.†

* BORLASE's "Antiquities of Cornwall," p. 97.

† Much has been said respecting the horror which Cæsar and other Romans felt at the immolation of human beings by the Druids. Let the following single case from their own history show how reasonably this feeling might have been excited in their own country. After Sejanus had been put to death, we are told, that "the children of this unhappy man, a boy and a girl, though too young to partake in his guilt, were included in the same fate with their father. The girl, with much innocence, asked those by whom she was seized, what she had done; assured them, with infantine

Another feature of this religion, which deserves a brief notice on account of its peculiarity, is the reverential respect which was paid to the mistletoe. To this some partial reference has been already made. It was the mistletoe of the oak to which the Druids attached so much importance. The solemn rites connected with the gathering of this plant have been already detailed from Pliny; but no sufficient reason has been assigned for the feelings of reverence with which it was regarded, nor can any thing be now offered beyond conjecture on this head. Some have supposed that one of the reasons for this great veneration arose out of the striking manner in which the mistletoe seemed to mark out the two distinguishing seasons of the year; it being said, that its blossom falls off within a few days of the summer solstice, and the berry within a few days of the winter solstice. Yet this of itself would certainly not have raised it to so great respect as that with which it was regarded. "For the Druids," says Pliny, "hold nothing more sacred than the mistletoe, and the tree on which it is produced, provided it be an oak." Every such tree they "think is sent from heaven, and is a sign that God Himself has chosen it. This, however, is very rarely found; but, when discovered, it is treated with great ceremony. They call it by a name which, in their language, signifies 'the curer of all ills.'" On this subject the author of a little work to which frequent reference has been made, observes: "The Israelites looked for a Redeemer,

simplicity, that she would never do it again; and begged that they would not carry her to prison. It is subjoined to this piteous detail, that, in compliance with *a vile superstition*, which the consideration of innocence could not restrain, she was ordered to be ravished previous to her execution; because it was ominous of misfortune to inflict the punishment of death upon a virgin. The bodies of these innocents were then dragged through the streets, and cast into the river." (FERGUSON'S "Roman Republic," vol. v., p. 354.) Such was the unenviable character of the boasted religion and civilization of Rome during the reign of the immediate successor of Augustus! Nor is this a solitary instance of the demoralizing tendency, and consequent gross inhumanity, of its pagan morality. Many other baneful effects of this system will be found in that able and convincing book, DR. LELAND'S "Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation, shown from the State of Religion in the ancient Heathen World," &c.

who should come in future times : they typified His advent by the scape-goat, and a variety of emblems. The Druids did the same : they looked for some one who was typified under the emblem of the mistletoe. Virgil, speaking of this plant, calls it 'the golden branch,' and says, that by its efficacious powers alone man could return from the dreary realms beneath. The Druids represented the Almighty by the oak ; supposing that that tree exhibited in the liveliest manner the God of vegetative nature ; eternal, omnipotent, self-existing, defying the assaults of a past eternity, and looking on the future as only equal to Himself in duration. From Him came the Branch so much spoken of by ancient prophets, *the Curer of all our ills*, who is indeed the Resurrection and the Life, without whose kind assistance we cannot return from the gloomy territories of the grave." *

On this quotation another writer observes : "Without pledging ourselves to the belief of every sentiment contained in this passage, we beg to make one remark,—that as it was a very general practice of the ancients to represent and convey their ideas by means of symbols taken from nature, especially by trees and plants, and their various parts ; that as trees in the garden of Eden were divinely pointed out as emblematical of the most awful ideas,—life and happiness, death and misery ; and that as the promised Saviour is repeatedly characterized in the sacred writings by the symbolical appellations of 'Branch,' 'Rod,' 'Root of David,' 'Tree of Life, 'Plant of Renown ;' we see no reason whatsoever for denying to the British Druids the right and propriety of making the mistletoe of the oak a symbol of the promised Saviour, and calling it 'the curer of all ills,' to remind themselves and the people of the benefits which the Saviour would confer on them." †

To these remarks we may add, that not only are these views sanctioned by Scripture, but they appear to be supported by profane authors, and the general practice of the

* "Identity of Religions called Druidical and Hebrew," p. 68.

† JAMES'S "Patriarchal Religion," p. 87. These views are also supported by Mr. Brydges, in his "Testimony of profane History," p. 95.

Heathen nations. Homer, as well as Virgil, speaks of the "golden rod or branch : " * and it is well known, that in almost every Heathen system we can trace some reference to a deliverer or restorer, who is shadowed forth by some figures or emblems, which, however faint and glimmering the light they imparted, did nevertheless tend to exhibit the Saviour as "the Desire of all nations."

The augury and divination of the Druids now demand our attention. It is evident from holy Scripture, that Jehovah gave to the first family prophetic intimations of future events. The same course was pursued in the case of Noah ; he was informed of the approaching Deluge ; all its important circumstances were foretold to the pious patriarch ; and after this terrible event he was further made acquainted with certain things which should occur, and others which should not. All this must have powerfully impressed the human mind with the important fact, that the Divine Being certainly foreknows future events, and, on certain special occasions, for wise purposes, communicates a measure of this knowledge to mankind. What further prophetic information, if any, was communicated to the post-diluvian world, from this time to that of the Dispersion, we are not informed ; and on this point it would be vain to speculate. Yet it is certain that, in the earliest ages of every ancient nation, we find the existence of prophecy distinctly recognised. There appears to have been entertained a widely-spread opinion, that God did sometimes foretell future events, and that this was generally done through human instrumentality.

Hence the oracles, divination, and auguries of the Heathen world. In what manner these were first instituted, cannot now be ascertained ; their causes are buried in extreme antiquity. Nor can we go at length into the question of the agency through which the information was conveyed to those who used these several means of inquiry.

Bishop Sherlock contends that it is impious to disbelieve the Heathen oracles, and deny them to have been given out

* BRIDGES'S "Testimony of profane History," p. 63.

by the devil ; while Dr. Middleton professes his entire disbelief in them, and thinks himself warranted to pronounce that they were all impostures, invented and supported entirely by human craft, without any supernatural aid or interposition whatever.* On such an obscure subject the slightest ray of light from divine revelation must be esteemed a great advantage. We therefore call attention to the case of Balaam. Dr. Adam Clarke† states that “this person was one of the Asiatic *Moshelim*, who were similar to the *Poetæ* among the Latins and Greeks, and the Bards amongst the ancient British Druids.” It appears evident that he was a believer in the one true God ; that either from his knowledge or practices he was reputed by the Moabites as a sorcerer ; that he was covetous, and loved the wages of unrighteousness ; that he did receive and communicate some of the most remarkable prophecies contained in Holy Scripture ; and that, while doing this, he was employed to exercise divination against Israel, he being probably an Ammonite, certainly a Gentile. Was his the only case of this kind which ever occurred ? Or did God in those early days put honour on those who knew and worshipped Him, by communicating to them, on some special crisis, the power of foretelling future events ? And was it from an abuse of this gift in some cases, and an attempt to counterfeit it in others, that the divination and augury of the ancients arose ?

It seems evident that something of this kind obtained among the Druids of Britain. It is, however, easier to prove that this practice existed, than clearly to show its true character and extent. Pliny, who speaks very explicitly on this subject, appears to identify it with the Magism of Persia. His words are : “In Britain at this day it is highly honoured ; where the people are so wholly devoted to it, with all reverence and religious observation of ceremonies, that a man would think the Persians first learned all their magic from them.”‡ Dr. Borlase informs us, in explanation of this

* See LEMPRIERE, sub voce *Oraculum*.

† In his Commentary on Numbers xxi. 27, and xxii. 6.

‡ PLINII *Nat. Hist.*, lib. xxx., cap. 1.

passage, that “one of the chief functions of the Magi of the East was to divine, that is, to foretell future events; the term *magus* signifying among the ancients, not a magician in the modern sense, but a superintendent of sacred and natural knowledge.” * And there is every reason for believing that the Druids performed the same art. They were so celebrated for the prediction of future events, that the Roman emperors frequently consulted them. The women also uttered prophetic declarations.†

The methods adopted for this purpose were various. The most solemn rite was that which was universally followed in the Gentile world, that is, an accurate examination of the entrails of the victims. To this ordinary practice they are said to have added another peculiarly horrid. “On great occasions they practise a very strange and incredible manner of divination. They take a man who is to be sacrificed, and kill him with one stroke of a sword above the diaphragm; and by observing the posture in which he falls, his different convulsions, and the direction in which the blood flows from his body, they form their predictions, according to certain rules which have been left them by their ancestors.” ‡ They also divined by augury,—that is, by observations made on the voices, flying, eating, mirth or sadness, health or sickness, of birds,—and by a variety of other methods, such as the number of criminal causes, and remarkable incidents, and by lots and tallies.

We have confined our notice on this part to the prediction of future events, as there can be little doubt that, with the exception of this, what was then called “magic” was nothing more than the most remarkable ordinary operations of nature, paraded by the learned as wonders before the eyes of the ignorant.

We now add a few general remarks on the religion of the Britons.

Even at the close of this period, the Britons were celebrated for their religious knowledge and zeal. As a people

* “Antiquities of Cornwall,” p. 138.

† *Ibid.*

‡ DIODORUS SICULUS, lib. v., cap. 35.

they were neither ignorant nor careless. They knew the principles of their faith, and diligently attended to its institutions. This is the testimony of an enemy. For although the Romans entertained the most inveterate hatred to the British religion and its priesthood, yet Cæsar freely admits that “such of the Gauls as were desirous of being thoroughly instructed in the principles of their religion, usually took a journey into Britain for that purpose.”

The influence of this religion had a very favourable effect on the public mind. “The Druids were remarkable for justice, moral and religious doctrines, and skill in the laws of their country; for which reason all disputes were referred to their arbitration; and their decision, whether relating to private and domestic, or public and civil, affairs, was final; and the most heavy punishments were inflicted on those who should be so obstinate as not to abide by their determination. *To do no evil*, was one of their general precepts; as *to be valiant in battle*, was another; but the first and chief was, *to worship the gods*.” * From this entire account it appears evident, that the religion which the Druids taught must have had firm hold on the public mind; and if so, their power and discipline, in connexion with their remarkable justice and morals, must have operated very favourably on the conduct and character of the people.

It is, indeed, a remarkable circumstance that, with one exception, (and this capable of explanation,)† we never hear

* BOBLASE’S “Antiquities of Cornwall,” p. 96; citing Strabo as his authority.

† “Respecting their matrimonial connexions, Cæsar says, ‘Ten or twelve persons, who are commonly near relations, as fathers, sons, and brothers, all have wives in common. But the children are presumed to belong to that man to whom the mother was married.’ It, however, appears evident that Cæsar was deceived by the manner in which the Britons lived. As several families nearly related to each other resided together in one habitation, and as their houses and domestic arrangements were very inferior to those of the Romans, the unfavourable suspicions referred to were naturally produced. The truth, however, appears to be, that the laws of matrimony were held as sacred, and the violations of them as odious, among the Britons as among the Germans, who lived in a similar manner, but whose chastity was proverbial.”—HENRY, vol. i., p. 447.

anything to the disparagement of their morals. They are, indeed, severely censured for inhumanity, but it is only in connexion with their sacrifices ; while all the notices referring to the British character are of a favourable cast. Diodorus says of the Britons, "They are of much sincerity and integrity, far from the craft and knavery of men among us ; contented with homely fare, strangers to excess and luxury." *

Another circumstance which deserves a passing notice, is the immense influence and authority exercised by the Druids, and the means by which it was supported. From what has been already stated, it is clear that scarcely any priests or governors in any age exercised an authority so extensive and powerful as that which was possessed by the British Druids. They were the judges, from whose decisions there was no appeal ; the priests, without whose aid there could be no worship ; the teachers, who alone imparted instruction : in short, all the elements of absolute power were possessed by this order, and the means adopted for its maintenance were decisive. For this purpose certain annual dues were exacted from every family, by the Druids of the district within which the family dwelt. All those families were obliged, under the dreadful penalties of excommunication, to extinguish their fires on the last evening of October, and to attend the temple with their annual offering ; and on the first day of November to receive some of the sacred fire from the altar, by which to rekindle those in their houses. By this means, they were obliged to attend and conform to the rule, or be deprived of the use of fire at the approach of winter. If any of the neighbours took pity on the delinquents, and supplied them with fire, or even conversed with them, they subjected themselves to the same terrible sentence, by which they were excluded from all the religious assemblies and sacrifices, from all the sweets of society, and from all the benefits of law and justice.†

Another peculiar feature in the religion and civil polity

* *Bibl. Hist.*, lib. v., cap. 2.

† DR. HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. i., p. 97.

of the ancient Britons, was their great respect for the female character. This was carried to an extent unknown in almost every other field of ancient history. Females were permitted to attend all the assemblies for the transaction of public business, and to be present at the sacrifices; and some of them were initiated into the mysteries of Druidism; for there were female, as well as male, Druids, who appear to have taken part in all the religious services, and even to have studied augury and divination.

From this brief delineation of the religion of the ancient Britons, it appears evident, that they preserved among them, even to the close of the period under consideration, the most prominent doctrines of patriarchal faith. They recognised the one true God, believed in the immortality of the soul, offered a regular succession of sacrifices, and approached God in worship with prayer and thanksgiving. Again, we see that these doctrines were not concealed or uninfluential: the people were instructed, and their general course of life was affected by their religious principles. Not only was good effected to a certain extent by these means, but strict cognizance was also taken of all injustice and improper conduct, and punishment awarded as it appeared to be deserved.

The beneficial results of these arrangements must have been greatly limited by the degraded condition of a very large portion of the population, who were little, if in any respect, better than slaves, and by the unreasonable amount of power possessed by the nobility. The uncontrolled authority of the Druids must, also, to a certain extent, have operated perniciously, inasmuch as it afforded constant temptations to them to aggrandize their order at the expense of the public interest, and even of truth itself. Yet on this head it is but just to observe, that, in all the accounts of this period which have come under our notice, there is no complaint of Druidical tyranny or extortion. On the contrary, there is every evidence that the Druids stood high in the respect and affection of the people. These circumstances, however, must be taken in connexion with

the obvious fact that this religion had already lost a measure of its purity, and was fast tending to corruption. Although no idols had been introduced, trees, hills, and rivers, the sun, moon, and stars, were revered as in some manner representing or exhibiting the divine power and glory. Although polytheism had not, perhaps, been received, the manner in which the several divine attributes were personified, and the pictorial representations of persons celebrated for having made useful discoveries or improvements in the arts, show that the bulwarks of the pure and primitive faith were fast yielding to decay, and that Britain, although memorable for its long preservation of the patriarchal religion, united in this respect with every other part of the world in exhibiting the necessity of "a new and *better* covenant."

CHAPTER III.

THE SUBJECTION OF BRITAIN TO THE ROMANS.

THE Britons, whose history and condition hitherto we have endeavoured to exhibit, are now to be regarded as subject to a powerful foreign invasion. By his talents and energy Julius Cæsar had raised himself to the highest military and political power which imperial Rome in the zenith of her prosperity could afford ; and, not content with subduing Gaul, defeating the Germans, and extending the dominion of his country to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, he resolved, under the impulse of insatiable ambition, to attempt the conquest of Britain. No other intelligible motive can be assigned for that enterprise. Having determined on this object, in the summer of the year 55 B.C., he sent an officer with a galley to obtain information respecting the coast and the inhabitants. While the necessary preparations were being made, the Britons, having had notice of his designs, sent ambassadors to him in Gaul, and offered their submission to the authority of Rome. Cæsar gave them a very kind reception ; and, having exhorted them to continue in this mind, he sent them back to Britain, and with them Comius, on whose fidelity and prudence he fully depended, that he might use his influence to persuade the Britons to submit to the Roman government.

Meanwhile, Volusenus, who had been sent to explore the coast, returned. He had not ventured to leave his galley, but satisfied himself with the information which he was able to obtain without landing. On this, Cæsar embarked the infantry of two legions, (about twelve thousand men,) on board eighty transports, and set sail from Portus Itius, or Whitsand, between Calais and Boulogne ; and at ten o'clock on the morning of August 26th, B.C. 55,* he reached the

* DR. HALLEY

coast of Britain off Dover, and discovered the high cliffs covered with armed men. Perceiving the impossibility of disembarking at this place, he coasted along to the northward, until reaching a convenient situation, between Walmer Castle and Sandwich, he determined there to effect a landing. This was obtained, however, with great difficulty, and after a long and bloody conflict. The tenth, Cæsar's favourite legion, at the head of which he himself afterwards fought at Pharsalia, mainly contributed to this success.* It is not our province to detail the particulars of these murderous conflicts; yet it may be remarked, that Cæsar fully awards to the Britons all the qualities of good soldiers. They manifested not only a daring courage, but sufficient skill to avail themselves of every advantage of circumstance and position; and it was evidently in consequence solely of the superior manner in which the Roman legions were accoutred and disciplined, that they obtained the first victory over the Britons, after a series of desperate efforts.

Upon this defeat, the Britons immediately sent ambassadors to sue for peace, and, with them, Comius, whom they had detained in prison. Having blamed them for what he chose to call their breach of faith, Cæsar promised forgiveness, but required hostages as security for their future good conduct. On the day on which this peace was concluded, Cæsar's cavalry, which had been left wind-bound in Gaul, were enabled to leave the harbour, and succeeded in nearing the British coast, and even in obtaining a view of the Roman camp; when they were dispersed by a tempest, and obliged to seek refuge in the harbour which they had left. That very night it happened to be full moon, when the tides always rise highest; and in Cæsar's narrative it is recorded, that the Romans were then utterly ignorant of this important natural phenomenon.† The spring-tide, and the high wind which prevailed, nearly destroyed the fleet. The light galleys which had been drawn up on the beach were filled with the rising waters; and the larger transports which lay

* *De Bello Gallico.*

† *Ibid.*, lib. iv., cap. 26.

at anchor were dashed against the shore, and greatly injured. This disaster spread universal consternation through the camp. The soldiers were well aware that they had no other vessels, nor any materials for repairing the damage which had been sustained, and that they were totally without provisions, as it had not been the intention of Cæsar to winter in the island. Suetonius considers this event one of the three great disasters which had happened to Cæsar during the nine years of his command in Gaul.

Nor were their apprehensions unfounded. The Britons perceived the critical position of the invading army, and gradually left the Roman camp. And as all the harvest had been gathered in except one field, they presumed that the Romans would go there to forage. Thither they collected their forces, and made a furious attack on the small party sent on this service. Cæsar, having been apprised of their danger, immediately marched to their rescue, and succeeded in bringing back to the intrenched camp the legion which had been almost overpowered. He had in the mean time used the greatest diligence in repairing his ships, and employed the materials of those which were most injured to mend the others. The prevalence for several days of heavy rain prevented further operations. When this had ceased, Cæsar renewed the war, and obtained a decisive victory. Having pursued the vanquished Britons as far as the strength and circumstances of his men would allow, he returned to his former encampment. The same day another application was made for peace; which Cæsar immediately granted, only requiring twice the number of hostages. Yet, without even waiting for these, a fair wind having sprung up, he set sail at midnight, and safely arrived on the continent, after the army had been three weeks on the island. Thus ended the first Roman expedition against Britain; an expedition which produced little real honour, and less advantage. Yet, for *these successes*, as they were deemed, the senate of Rome decreed twenty days of thanksgiving.

The following year Cæsar, having made extensive preparations, renewed the invasion of Britain with a powerful army.

On this occasion he left Portus Itius in the spring, with eight hundred vessels, having a force of about thirty-two thousand men, including two thousand cavalry. On seeing this formidable force, the Britons retired from the coast; and Cæsar landed, without opposition, very near the place of his former encampment. Having made himself acquainted with the route taken by the retiring Britons, and left a sufficient guard to protect his camp and fleet, he commenced about midnight a hot pursuit. After a hurried march, he came in sight of the enemy, who were posted on a slope, having in their front a river, probably the Stour, near Canterbury. Here they availed themselves of the advantages of their position; and, with their cavalry and chariots, boldly disputed the passage of the stream.* The Romans, however, proving successful, the Britons again retreated "towards the woods, into a place strongly fenced both by nature and art, and which, in all probability, had been previously fortified; for all the avenues were secured by strong barricades of felled trees, laid one upon another."† The seventh legion, which had suffered so severely in the preceding campaign whilst out on foraging duty, carried this position by assault. But their success seems to have been productive of little advantage to the Romans, as they could not venture to pursue the Britons through the woods. Cæsar therefore employed the remainder of the day in fortifying his camp. The next morning, just as the Romans were advancing in search of the warlike islanders, information was brought to Cæsar, that the fleet had during the night been greatly injured by a violent storm. This disastrous intelligence induced the Roman general to order an immediate retreat. Returning to his fleet, he thought it the safest plan to draw up all the vessels on the shore; and having given orders for the repairing of those which were not wholly destroyed, he occupied ten days and nights in securing his ships within the bounds of his camp, and beyond the reach of winds and waves. Having taken these precautionary measures, and left a detachment in possession of his fortifications, he led the rest of the army

* *De Bello Gallico*, lib. v., cap. 8.

† *Ibid.*

to the place where he had been recalled from the pursuit of the enemy. The Britons, no less attentive to their interests, availed themselves of this delay to increase their army, and confided the entire command to a powerful prince called Cassivelaunus. An incident occurred during the march of the Romans which showed, that, however deficient the Britons might have been when opposed to the Roman legions in a pitched battle, they were nevertheless no strangers to the art of war. Cæsar thus relates it: "Some time after, sallying suddenly from the woods, and falling upon our men while employed in fortifying their camp, a sharp conflict ensued between them and the advanced guard. Cæsar sent two cohorts to their assistance; whom the Britons, charging in separate parties, so surprised with their new manner of fighting, that they broke through, routed them, and retired without loss."* Troops, that in small bodies could attack Roman legionaries and rout them, even when supported by a fresh body of twelve hundred men, without the loss of any of their own number, must have been formidable on account of their skill as well as their courage.

The day following, a general battle was fought, in which the Britons were defeated; upon which, Cassivelaunus dismissed his auxiliary forces, and kept only four thousand war-chariots to watch the progress of the Roman army, and to make any advantageous movements for which circumstances might offer him an opportunity. Cæsar advanced with his troops, and crossed the Thames at Coway, notwithstanding the attempt of the Britons to make that part of the river impassable, by sharp stakes driven into the ground. The capital of Cassivelaunus, which lay in the neighbourhood of the present town of St. Alban's, was soon afterwards taken by the Romans, the inhabitants retiring to other parts of the country. Meanwhile an attack was made on their naval camp, by the Kentish chieftains, at the request of Cassivelaunus. It failed, and the Britons again sued for peace. Cæsar immediately complied with the request; and,

* *De Bello Gallico*, lib. v., cap. 11.

having received hostages, and imposed a yearly tribute, he left Britain: thus ended his second invasion. Well might Tacitus tersely remark: "Julius Cæsar, the first Roman who entered Britain with an army, although he terrified the inhabitants by a successful engagement, and became master of the shore, yet appears rather to have transmitted the knowledge than the possession of the country to posterity."* Rome could not then boast of any conquest. The Romans mightily extolled what they called the success of Cæsar, and received his representations with very willing credence: some of the captured Britons were given to the theatre; a breastplate of British pearls was presented to Venus; and his victories in the island were painted on purple hangings.† But it is evident that Tacitus, who lived a hundred and fifty years later, gives a more faithful account of the actual results of the invasion; and, in doing so, incidentally casts light on the real condition of the inhabitants of the island.‡ That this opinion, deduced from the facts of the case, accorded with that entertained by the Britons themselves, is manifest; for, long afterwards, Boadicea and Caractacus alluded to the flight of the deified Julius, and invoked the manes of their ancestors who had expelled Cæsar the dictator.§

The progress and result of the Roman invasions have been thus given in detail, not only because we have from several authentic sources ample information respecting the various movements of the belligerents, but because it is important to cast every possible light on the character and condition of the Britons at this period, on account of our possessing scarcely any records of the ensuing century.

Soon after Cæsar's return to Gaul, the civil war occupied his entire attention, and he does not appear to have medi-

* *Vita Agricolaë*, cap. xiii. Aikin's Translation.

† VIRGILII *Georg.*, lib. iii., 25; and TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. i., p. 81.

‡ Plutarch shows his estimate of their power; for, having alluded to Cæsar's wars in Gaul and in Germany, he says, "But his expedition into Britain shows the most daring spirit of enterprise."—"Life of Cæsar," vol. v., p. 28.

§ *Vita Agricolaë*, cap. xv. *Annalium* lib. xii., cap. 84.

tated any further attack on the hardy islanders. Augustus, his successor in the imperial government, several times gave distant intimations of an intended expedition to Britain, and on one occasion entered France as if for the very purpose ; but he did not carry his threats into execution. He called this neglect, says Tacitus, "the wisdom of his counsels." It seems, indeed, as if those threats were made only with the design of obtaining, if possible, the promised tribute, the payment of which had been greatly intermitted and neglected ; it is even a matter of doubt whether any portion of it had ever been tendered.

Tiberius pursued a similar policy with respect to Britain. Yet the island gained little internal repose by an exemption from foreign invasion. The several British nations soon returned to the prosecution of war against each other. Over these kings, Cassivelaunus and his successors maintained an ascendancy. There is also reason to believe, that those who had favoured the Romans were afterwards severely punished for their baseness ; it being evident that the betrayers of their national independence were the greatest sufferers in the wars which followed. The people over whom three of them reigned were so entirely subdued, that they lost their very name and being as separate states, and are never afterwards mentioned in history. Cunobelinus was, in several respects, the most illustrious successor of Cassivelaunus, and the most powerful of the British princes of this period. He seems to have arrived at a degree of greatness formerly unknown in this island, and to have been sovereign of the principal part of South Britain. After his death, his dominions were divided between his widow, the famous Cartismandua, queen of the Brigantes, and his two sons, Caractacus and Togodumnus, who were the most considerable princes in Britain when it was next invaded by the Romans under the emperor Claudius.*

During the reign of Tiberius, the Britons were not only freed from Roman aggression, but a good understanding

* DR. HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. i., p. 18.

appears to have been maintained between the two nations ; the Romans accepting such presents, tributes, and customs as were freely rendered, and the Britons manifesting a friendly disposition as opportunities presented themselves. In this spirit of conciliation, when some of the vessels in which the troops of Germanicus sailed from Germany were wrecked on the coast of Britain, the princes of this country received and entertained them with great kindness, and sent them back to their general.

Caligula, the nephew and successor of Tiberius, was flattered in Gaul by one of the British princes who sought an asylum in his court ; and he professed to undertake the conquest of the island. This purpose, however, ended, like most of the actions of that miserable emperor, in mere verbiage. He marched his army, consisting of two hundred thousand men, down to the shore of Gaul, opposite to Britain. Then, while his army remained on the beach, with all their engines of war, he embarked on board a galley, sailed out a short distance, and returned. Upon his landing, he ordered a charge to be sounded ; and as no enemy appeared, he commanded his soldiers to gather up a quantity of shells from the beach, and to bear them away as trophies of their victory over the ocean. These testaceous monuments he transmitted to Rome ; as the best ornaments that could grace the triumph to be awarded to him for this glorious exploit !*

Claudius, who succeeded Caligula in the empire, provided in good earnest for the subjection of Britain. It seems to have been a custom in those times for such persons of distinction as were expelled or obliged to fly out of the island, to take refuge in the court of Rome. One of these fugitives persuaded Claudius to attempt the conquest of the island. The enterprise having been resolved upon, Aulus Plautius, a general of great wisdom and valour, was commanded to conduct a considerable army out of Gaul into Britain. The soldiers feared the dangers of the expedition, and manifested

* DR. HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. i., p. 20.

much reluctance to embark : it was with considerable difficulty that Plautius prevailed upon them to follow him. This being effected, he divided them into three bodies, which all arrived in safety on the British coast, and landed without opposition. This army consisted of four complete legions, with their auxiliaries and cavalry, amounting nearly to fifty thousand men. Among the principal commanders, under the general, were Vespasian, who afterwards became emperor, Sabinus his brother, and other eminent officers.

On this occasion, the Britons do not seem to have been aware of their danger. We read of no confederacy having been formed, no commander-in-chief elected, nor of any army having been raised to guard the coasts, and repel the invaders. It is indeed difficult, and painful to humanity, to detail the various events of the war which followed. Our sketch will, therefore, be as brief as is consistent with the design of giving any tolerable idea of the conquest of the country. The operations of this campaign commenced in the ninety-seventh year after Cæsar's second expedition.

The Roman general, having safely disembarked his troops, marched into the interior of the country ; and, having successively defeated Caractacus and his brother Togodumnus, he offered powerful inducements to some of the smaller states to place themselves in alliance with the conquerors. Yet the Roman army still proceeded into the country, defeated the Britons beyond the Severn, and then followed them eastward ; until the native troops made a stand in the marshes of the Thames, where another desperate battle was fought, in which the British prince, Togodumnus, was slain. In this conflict the Romans suffered very severely ; and it is matter of doubt whether they could boast of having obtained even the semblance of a victory. Plautius, perceiving the obstinate determination of his foes, retreated to the south of the Thames, and wrote to Rome, urgently soliciting the presence of the emperor himself, with additional legions. Claudius soon arrived in Britain ; and the army, having been strengthened by vast reinforcements, crossed the Thames ; and, although it is uncertain whether any battle of importance

was fought, it is admitted that *Camalodunum*, (Maldon,) the capital of the Trinobantes, was subdued by the Romans. Upon this success, Claudius received the proffered submission of some of the states; and then hastily returned to Rome to enjoy an easily-acquired triumph. Meanwhile, Vespasian was employed in subduing the Isle of Wight, and the maritime states in the southern coasts of the island.

But, notwithstanding these partial advantages, the Romans are reputed to have subdued no more of the island than that small portion which lay to the south of the Thames, with a very narrow slip of territory to the north of that river; and after the recall of Plautius, in A.D. 47, even this limited dominion was subject to the daring incursions of the Britons. For about three years from this date the Roman interest seems to have been confided to the separate commanders of the legions, who were scarcely able to maintain the ground which Plautius had occupied. In A.D. 50, Ostorius Scapula, a general of consular dignity, was appointed governor of Britain. On his debarkation he found all things in great confusion. At first he exerted himself to recover and secure the full extent of territory which Plautius had gained. He then adopted a course never before tried by the Romans in Britain,—that of defending the conquered portions of the country by a line of forts built on the frontier, which, in this case, were erected on the banks of the Severn and of the Antina. He also pursued the cautious policy of disarming all the Britons within this line of forts whom he suspected. This measure, always obnoxious to a people possessed of a martial spirit, was peculiarly so to a numerous tribe called the Iceni, who had, without any attempt at resistance, entered into a friendly alliance with the Romans. Having armed themselves, they were joined by some of the neighbouring nations; an army was thus raised, formidable at once from its numbers and its valour. Ostorius, knowing the advantage of celerity on such occasions, quickly collected his troops, attacked the revoltors, and, after an obstinate and bloody battle, obtained a complete victory. This danger elicited still further the policy of the Roman general, who,

to prevent similar troubles, garrisoned a large number of veteran troops at Camalodunum. He then marched to the western part of the island, whence he was recalled to suppress an insurrection of the Brigantes, who occupied Yorkshire and part of Lancashire. These being speedily subdued, he planted another colony of veterans among the conquered. He was called thence to resist a powerful army, drawn together by the Silures, a people of South Wales, under the great Caractacus. To their natural ferocity, they added the courage which they now derived from the presence of their general. Renowned for his valour, and for many vicissitudes of good and evil fortune, that heroic chief had spread his fame through the island.* The British prince selected a very favourable position to receive the attack of Ostorius at the head of his legions; but the superior coolness, tactics, and defensive armour of the Romans enabled them again to triumph over the impetuous bravery of their antagonists. As long as they fought with missile weapons, the Britons had the advantage; but when Ostorius ordered his troops to advance, and, under cover of a shell of shields, to level the stone-fence in front of the British position, their superior arms prevailed, and a complete victory crowned their efforts. The wife and daughter of Caractacus were taken prisoners immediately after the battle. The hero himself escaped, and sought refuge at the court of his step-mother, Cartismandua, queen of the Brigantes. This heartless woman delivered him in chains to the Romans. The renown of the man who, for nine years, had resisted the Roman power, not only filled this island, but extended to Italy and even to Rome itself. All desired to feast their eyes upon this royal captive; and the emperor, participating the common joy, adopted means to make his entry into the capital as public and imposing as possible. On the day appointed for the solemnity, the prætorian guards were drawn up under arms; and the emperor and empress were seated on two lofty tribunals. There first appeared in the procession the servants and followers of the British king,

* *TACITI Annal.*, lib. xii., cap. 33.

with the military harness, golden chains, and other spoils, which he had taken from his neighbours in war; then followed his brothers, his wife, and his daughter; and Caractacus in native greatness closed the spectacle. All the other prisoners were dejected by their misfortunes; but the hero himself appeared undaunted and erect, without betraying one suppliant look, or uttering a word that implored mercy. When he came into the imperial presence, he addressed Claudius in a speech which was manly, without being insolent, and in which he boldly intimated that the imperial dignity would derive more glory from manifesting clemency to him than from any exercise of severity. The emperor had sufficient nobility of mind to estimate the character of his captive, who was immediately pardoned and released.

“At the next meeting of the senate, the victory over Caractacus was mentioned with the highest applause, as an event no way inferior to what had been seen in ancient times, when Publius Scipio brought Syphax in chains to Rome; when Lucius Paulus led Perses in captivity; and when other commanders exhibited to the Roman people kings and princes at their chariot-wheels.”*

Yet, notwithstanding the intense joy and exultation with which those successes were received at Rome, the spirit of the Britons, and especially of the Silures, was unbroken. Without hazarding another great battle, they maintained the war with unabated vigour; and, after continual and harassing attacks and surprisals, the Roman general had the mortification to behold his camps invaded, the bravest of his officers and men slain in ceaseless and annoying skirmishes, and numbers of his auxiliary forces made prisoners, and distributed over the country. Worn out with care and vexation, he died (as it is said) “of a broken heart,” to the inexpressible joy of his enemies.

For several years after the death of Ostorius, the Romans rather retrograded than advanced in their attempts on Britain. This is partly to be attributed to the valour and prudence of the Silures, and likewise, in some measure, to the conduct

* *TACITI Annal.*, lib. xii., cap. 38. Murphy's Translation.

of the infamous Cartismandua, queen of the Brigantes, who had been in close alliance with Rome from the time of her delivering the brave Caractacus to his foes. This vile woman having separated from her husband, and thrown herself into the arms of one of her officers, the scandalous action gave such great and general offence, that her people revolted. After a short struggle, they succeeded in driving her from the throne, and raising the injured husband to the vacant dignity; in consequence of which, the degraded queen sought refuge among the Romans, and her royal consort united his forces with those of the Britons.

Suetonius Paulinus was appointed to the command in Britain, A.D. 59; and, during the first two years of his government, his military operations were generally prosperous. He subdued several British tribes; and a number of garrisons were placed to keep them in subjection. Encouraged by his successfulness, in the third year he planned a most important enterprise: this was the conquest of the Isle of Anglesea, at that time the residence of the Arch-Druid, and the asylum of all the enemies of the Roman government. Having marched to the western coast of Wales, and provided flat-bottomed boats for crossing the Menai Straits, he found the British army drawn up to oppose his landing, and among them the Druids, both male and female, with their hands raised to heaven, and pouring out the most direful imprecations against their enemies.

The Roman troops were at first daunted by the unearthly appearance of their foes. Aroused by the exhortations of their general, they made a furious attack, which overwhelmed all opposition, and insured a complete victory. This stronghold of Druidism was consequently destroyed. The groves were cut down, and the Druids slaughtered. This event was undoubtedly very important to the Roman interest; yet it tended to inflame the Britons more than any other circumstance; and as it occurred nearly at the same time that such cruel treatment was inflicted upon Boadicea and her daughters, a general insurrection was the consequence.*

* Boadicea was queen of the Iceni; her husband, at his death, left the

The Britons flew to arms; and, taking advantage of the absence of the governor, the first outbreak of their fury fell on the Roman colony of Camalodunum. This was stormed and destroyed with fire and sword, and the legion that marched to its relief was cut to pieces. Suetonius hastened his return to London, at that period a respectable trading town: being unable to defend it, he retired. The Britons annoyed him in his retreat, and destroyed nearly all the inhabitants that remained. Verulamium was involved in similar ruin; so that in the course of a few days seventy thousand persons lost their lives. The following is the conclusion of the rapid sketch of this period which Tacitus has given: "Our veteran forces were put to the sword; our colonies smoked on the ground; and the legions were intercepted on their march. *The struggle was then for life: we fought afterward for fame and victory.*" *

The Britons pursued their way, flushed with triumph. Confident in their numbers, they rashly engaged the Roman army, which, though consisting of only ten thousand men, contained the flower of their troops. Boadicea did all that could be done by a woman and a queen; she rode through the ranks, harangued her troops, and entreated them to take vengeance on the enemy. A desperate battle was fought; the cool intrepidity and superior discipline of the Romans again prevailed; and it was computed that eighty thousand Britons were left dead on the field.

Undeterred by this dreadful defeat, the Britons continued the war; and upwards of sixteen years passed away, without the prospect of its termination, or the occurrence of any very remarkable action.

Vespasian, who had recently succeeded to the imperial dignity, in A.D. 78, sent Cnæus Julius Agricola to be the Romans joint heirs of his kingdom with his daughters. Instead of being conciliated by this consideration, the troops ravaged his dominions, and the whole of that fine country was considered as a legacy bequeathed to the plunderers. They seized the government, and, on Boadicea remonstrating against such harshness, Catus, the procurator, caused her to be scourged, and her daughters violated in her presence.

* TACITI *Vita Agricolaë*, cap. v.

governor of Britain. He had served in this country under Suetonius Paulinus, and was an experienced officer, greatly beloved by the army, well acquainted with the ground, and one who fully understood the character of the people with whom he had to contend. It was this general whose talents and exertions finally reduced Britain to the condition of a Roman province. He was aware that a period of one hundred and thirty-four years had transpired, from the first invasion of the island by Julius Cæsar, to the year when he arrived; that, during the greater part of that time, the Roman arms had been crowned with success; but that while the troops had proved themselves capable of gaining battles, those who commanded them did not show themselves to be masters of the rare art of governing and conciliating a conquered people. His great mind seems to have divined the true reason of the severe reverses which the Roman arms had frequently received;—that it was in attempting too much, without regard to the security of previous conquests. Tacitus says: “The Britons willingly supply our armies with recruits, pay their taxes without a murmur, and perform all the services of government with alacrity, provided they have no reason to complain of oppression. When injured, their resentment is quick, sudden, and impatient. They are conquered, not spirit-broken; they may be *reduced to obedience, not to slavery.*” This was the opinion formed of our ancestors, by one who had a thorough knowledge of them. Upon this opinion, the result of personal experience, Agricola acted. He commenced his military operations with vigour; and, having made a powerful impression on the natives by some important, skilful, and fortunate advances, he employed the winter months in laying the foundation of a wise and equitable government. As commander-in-chief, he suffered none of his own domestics to be guilty of the least oppression; and promoted to offices of trust only such persons as had conducted themselves with honour and integrity in inferior stations. The complaints of the provincials were heard with the greatest patience, and redressed with a cheerful readiness. He delivered the Britons from the oppressive

extortions of tax-gatherers; and although he did not remit the tribute which had been required, he made the payment of it easy.

Thus Britain, which had long been the land of free men, and had maintained a protracted and brave struggle in support of her freedom, was at length compelled to bend the neck to a foreign yoke, and submit to the dominion of imperial Rome. From this period our country must be considered as part of that great empire; for though some of the extreme portions of the island might not then have formally submitted to the imperial regimen, it was solely their obscurity which placed them beyond the notice of the Roman arms, and not their own power of resistance, which enabled those distant tribes to rejoice somewhat longer in the shadow of their rude and native liberty.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RELIGION INTRODUCED INTO BRITAIN BY THE ROMANS.

HAVING briefly sketched the principal methods of the warfare and policy adopted by the Romans in their varied and continuous attempts to subjugate the brave inhabitants of this island, we proceed to exhibit the religious system which they introduced. Before entering on this, however, it may be desirable to advert very briefly to some of the effects produced on the Britons by the importation of Roman arts, letters, science, and government.

Agricola had no sooner firmly established the Roman authority in South Britain, than he began to exhibit to the inhabitants the benefits and blessings which might be derived from the peaceful cultivation of the arts and sciences. For this purpose, he instructed and assisted the natives to build more commodious dwelling-houses for themselves; and thus they were incited to more elevated views of domestic convenience and comfort. Temples and courts of justice were afterwards erected. Those who cheerfully entered into his designs were praised and rewarded; while the sullen and reluctant were censured. By these means a spirit of emulation was raised, which was productive of consequences the most salutary. He also laboured to establish a plan of education, by which the sons of the chiefs were instructed in the elements of polite literature. He encouraged them by commending their talents and genius; and the people who had previously held the Roman language in the utmost contempt, now began to study it with diligence, and to appreciate its beauties.* They soon began to admire, and then to imitate, their conquerors in their apparel, banquets, splendid porticoes, sumptuous baths, and other appliances of luxurious

* TACITUS, in *Vita Agricola*, cap. xxi.

tranquillity ; and became great adepts in the polished manners of progressive civilization.

In consequence of these wise actions of the new governor, a manifest improvement took place in the condition of the Britons. For although, as we have already intimated, we think there is reason to conclude, that the Britons have been represented as more uncivilized than they really were, yet it is indisputable that at this period the Romans had attained the summit of elegance and refinement, and were therefore capable of affording the rough islanders much important instruction.

The dwellings of the Britons were very rude and simple in the early ages, being mostly constructed of hurdle or wicker-work, and afterward of large stones without mortar. Their houses were generally round, having the roof thatched, with a hole left in the centre for the escape of the smoke. The Romans, on the contrary, had long been accustomed to elegant and commodious dwellings, well built of masonry, and adorned with statues, pictures, elegant drapery, and handsome furniture. As colonies were planted, and wealthy officials were sent to reside in different parts of the island, the architecture and domestic economy of the Romans were introduced. These arts and elegancies not being left to make their way merely by the force of their own real merits, but being recommended and stimulated with all the influence of the government, we need not be surprised to find that a great alteration was soon effected. Hence a number of towns sprang up with astonishing rapidity.* The face of the country, and the manners of the inhabitants, were thereby immensely altered. So quickly was this change effected, that we have a list of one hundred and forty towns, in that part of Britain which was subject to the Romans, at the end of the first century, only twenty years after the efforts of Agricola had commenced.

In addition to these, several Roman colonies were estab-

* WHITAKER'S "Manchester," vol. i., pp. 267-269; PTOLEMY; and the Itinerary, given by DR. HENRY, "History of Great Britain," vol. i., Appendix.

lished, in each of which a body of Roman legionary soldiers was stationed as inhabitants of the town. Here they had very little intermixture with the natives, having their wives and children with them, and being governed in civil matters by the Roman municipal laws. They were subject, nevertheless, at the same time, to military rule; each male child being a legionary soldier by birth; and, therefore, liable to be called away as the public service required. These colonies were planted at several times and places, as it became necessary to have strong military positions in different parts of the island. They were Camalodunum, (or Maldon,) London, Chesterford, Lincoln, and York, on the east side; and Bath, Gloucester, Caerleon, and Chester, on the western side of the island.* The towns in general, and these colonies in particular, were benefited and adorned by large and splendid public buildings. Camalodunum was a colony A.D. 50; and in eleven years afterward we find it furnished with temples, statues, theatres, and other public edifices. This we learn incidentally from Tacitus, who says that, immediately before the Boadicean insurrection, the statue of Victory fell from its pedestal without any visible means; and on that outbreak the whole Roman garrison took refuge in the temple of Claudius, which must therefore have been very large, while it was so strong that it resisted all the efforts of the besiegers for two days.†

In connexion with these improvements, the various subordinate arts received a proportionate impulse. Those relating to the manufacture of clothing were only partially known and practised in Britain before the arrival of the Romans; but afterward they were greatly cultivated and improved. The government of Rome was anxious to extend to every part of the empire a knowledge of the useful and fine arts. For this purpose great efforts were made to collect the best artificers of every trade, particularly the manufacturers of woollen and linen cloths, who were formed into corporations, with extensive privileges, and were located

* WHITAKER'S "History of Manchester," vol. i., p. 326.

† TACITUS *Annales*, lib. xiv., cap. 32.

in various parts of the empire, for the better supply of the court, the army, and the people. It appears that one of these imperial manufactories was established at Winchester.

The case was the same with respect to the artificers in wood. This branch of art must have been cultivated by the Britons previous to the Roman conquest, for the construction of their buildings, furniture, and more especially their chariots, of the elegance of which both Greek and Roman writers speak in terms of admiration. Yet in these trades the Romans were very competent to instruct their new subjects; and as towns were built, and temples and other public buildings raised, this would necessarily be done. With the working of metals the inhabitants of the island had been familiar from the earliest antiquity. Statuary was evidently an art introduced by the Romans; and painting, of which the Britons had some previous knowledge, was greatly improved.*

Although the Britons had previously carried on important commercial operations, yet, under the government of the Romans, this traffic increased; for, whereas before it was chiefly confined to the mining district in the west, it now became extensive and general. No more striking evidence of this is required, than that which is found in the rapid rising of London into importance. At the landing of the first Roman invaders, if there was any town here, it existed only as a stronghold in the centre of a forest. Yet, at the time of the war with Boadicea, when it had been about sixteen years in the possession of the Romans, we find it to be grown into a rich, populous, and beautiful city, remarkable for the number of its merchants, and even at that period the great mart of commerce.†

All these improvements must have been accompanied by a corresponding advancement in the mode of living and manners of the Britons. Yet it must not be forgotten, that, with these advantages, the Romans also imported many

* DR. HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. i., book i., chap. v.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 321; TACITUS, *Annales*, lib. xiv., cap. 33; WHITAKER'S "Manchester," vol. i., p. 270.

vices into the island. The chieftains, who had before lived in all hardihood and simplicity, were now taught, not only the elegancies of Roman life, but also its vices, luxuries, and effeminacy. The liberal policy of the Roman government tended to insure this; for notwithstanding that the towns generally were governed by Roman officers, some were favoured with a more indulgent charter, and permitted to elect their own president, justiciary, and tax-gatherer; and every person who had sustained these offices was entitled to all the immunities of a Roman citizen.* This privilege was afterward greatly extended; for, when philosophy, in the person of Antoninus Pius, was invested with the imperial authority, these narrow restraints were taken away, and the Roman citizenship was conferred upon every Briton of property and worth.†

Having thus given a brief view of the advancement made by the Britons, in their civil and political condition, in the industrial arts, trade, commerce, and general manners, while under the government of the Romans, we proceed to notice the religion which that people introduced into the island, and its effects on the character and condition of the inhabitants.

Considering our intimate acquaintance with Roman history and literature, this may appear a very simple inquiry; nevertheless we shall find it encumbered with considerable difficulty. The names of the principal deities, and their supposed history, may be easily ascertained: we may read of their priests and sacrifices, and yet have only imperfect ideas of that which, in accordance with our views, we call the religion of the Romans.

In our investigation of these particulars, we shall endeavour to show their true character, and to connect them with their practical bearing on the public mind. For this purpose, we shall notice in order the *nature*, *number*, and *character* of their gods; their religious *rites*, *ceremonies*,

* DR. HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. i., p. 325.

† WHITAKER'S "History of Manchester," vol. i., p. 329.

and *sacrifices* ; the *doctrines* received respecting the soul, and its future destiny ; the influence of this religion on the state and prospects of society ; and the opinions entertained of providence, morals, and motives.

It will not be expected that we should here enumerate the various deities of the imperial city. Their number precludes the possibility of it ; being so great, that it was said to be easier in Rome to find a god than a man. Every part of nature, every portion of time, every physical operation, all were consecrated to deities, and exhibited their presence and power. “ Does the blossom delight with its fragrance or its bloom ? Aurora has nourished it with her tears, and Zephyr has expanded it with his breath. Do the waters fret and babble among the rocks, or flow smoothly and gently through the windings of the valley ? Some Naiad sports with the current, and dances along the banks. Does the grape cluster on the vine, the harvest ripen into gold, or the orchard bend beneath its fruit ? It is to the benignity of Bacchus, Ceres, or Pomona, that the wants of men are indebted for the increase, and for the blessing. The shepherd tunes not his reed beneath the shade, the poet meditates not his song to love and beauty, without being favoured and inspired by some auspicious power ; and Pan, Diana, Venus, or the Muses, are perpetually beheld sporting with, and blessing, their favourite votaries. Even death itself, divested of its terrors, appears in the form of a Cupid with an inverted torch. The very lights of heaven are but the radiances of celestial natures. The sun is a god, who, seated in a chariot of fire, and borne along by the swiftness of immortal steeds, daily encircles the immensity of the world, and pours light and joy over the universe ; and the moon, presiding with more gentle sway over the night, supplies the absence of her brother, and cheers, with her tempered beams, the earth and the heavens. The scene of ocean has no less its appropriate rulers. In its courts and palaces of coral, Thetis, surrounded by nymphs of celestial bloom, celebrates her mysterious revels, and prepares the mighty couch for the wearied Apollo. Amid its blue and

undulating waters, the long-haired Triton floats in his car of pearl, and directs his attendants to guide some favoured bark from the whirlpool, or the rock ; or, if the mighty element be caught by the tempest, and rage and foam against the shores, it is the wrath of Neptune that swells and tosses the waves, as it is his benignity that shall silence their uproar, and hush them into peace. Over all, from the depths of Erebus to the expanse of heaven, Jupiter, the sire of gods and men, exercises his paternal or controlling power. He grasps the thunder in his anger ; sends forth the lightnings, and commissions the storms to do his will, and shakes by his nod the foundations of the universe ; but when he smiles, all nature is vivified and cheered." *

As if these were not sufficient, natural causes and material forms were converted into gods. There was scarcely a human want, wish, whim, prejudice, vice, or virtue, which did not possess its presiding divinity. The very animal functions of human nature were to be performed under the aid, or in the presence, of some peculiar power ; and twenty thousand deities, the easy creation of fear and hope, were scarcely deemed sufficient for the hierarchy of heaven.

Regarded merely as the creation of poetic genius, all this appears beautiful and appropriate ; but let us consider the spiritual and immortal interests of man, and conceive an individual under the conscious influence of the desires and aspirations which a knowledge of these interests is calculated to create, bending his anxious mind in search of a great First Cause—an almighty Governor, a God ; what answer does all this refined mythological scheme give to such a spirit ? Here are greater and lesser gods ; here are deities acting, not only independently, but even in direct opposition to each other. Yet such were the occupants of the Roman Pantheon, the objects worshipped by this refined and powerful people.

It must also be considered that, although, to some extent, the deities of Rome were more completely separated from

* ALLEY'S *Vindiciæ Christianæ*, p. 19.

mankind, and more exempt from the passions, the desires, and the crimes of man, than those of the Greeks, this resulted not so much from any superior views entertained by the Romans of the nature or character of the Deity, as from the fact that their principal gods were imported from Greece with merely an alteration of the name, and therefore did not stand so intimately connected with the early traditions of the people of Italy as they did with those of Greece. Thus Jupiter is the Grecian Zeus; Neptune, Poseidon; Mercury, Hermes; Mars, Ares; and Vulcan, Hephæstus. The goddesses may in the same way be referred to the corresponding deities of Greek fable. Consequently, so far as the Romans exhibited the character and conduct of their gods, they appear to have copied the Greeks.* They had, therefore, many instances of celestial crime and discord, which, if more remote, were still sufficiently evident. The actions ascribed to several of those deities, as well as their general dispositions, are very impure. Injustice, rage, malice, licentiousness, are abundantly displayed; they revel, riot, wanton, laugh, or, under the influence of more violent passions, turn heaven into a scene of furious contention and wild uproar. Nor are these peculiarities confined to celestial intercourse; they are amply exhibited in their dealings with mankind. In their government of the world, they were not only uncertain and variable in their individual characteristics, but subdivided into factions, at once hostile to each other, and to the welfare of man. Hence he who worshipped one deity, thereby offered an affront to another: the most entire devotedness to Jupiter would not avert the anger of Neptune. This extended from individuals to nations. Every country

* "Content with the religion of the Greeks, and other nations whom they conquered, they borrowed their divinities, worship, sacrifices, priests, festivals, in a word, the whole apparatus which idolatry drew after it without once having a thought of reducing so fantastical a religion to a system; and the most idolatrous city in the world was the least concerned about the history of its gods. Cicero, indeed, in his treatise, 'Of the Nature of the Gods,' gives some of their genealogies; but for the most part his notions are borrowed from the writings of the Greeks."—BANIER'S "Mythology," vol. i., p. 124.

had its divine patrons, and national prosperity or adversity was less to be attributed to the vices or virtues of the people, than to celestial favour fortuitously attracted, or celestial enmity unknowingly and undeservedly provoked.

In reply, it has been often urged, that, although this is the fact concerning the poetry of the Romans, and may probably be true of the belief of the lower orders of the people, yet this representation is not applicable to the cultivated and philosophic part of the community, who must have had much more elevated and correct ideas of the divine nature and character. Such opinions appear very plausible, and would indeed be gratifying, if they could be sustained. But they cannot. It is not denied that a difference of apprehension did exist in this respect ; some persons might have obtained views somewhat clearer than others ; but the preceding statements certainly exhibit the national opinion of their gods. Such is the uniform picture presented by the poets ; and where, after all, shall we seek a correct (however ornamented) delineation of national manners and sentiments, if it be not to be found in national poetry ? The view we have taken is confirmed by various official acts performed by great men on the most important occasions. Thus we find that, when besieging a town, the Romans solemnly invoked the tutelary deity of the place, and endeavoured to win him from the side of the enemy, by the promise of more costly offerings than he had been accustomed to receive. At the same time, they who thus tempted the gods of their opponents, attributed similar treachery or mutability to their own ; and the name of the protecting divinity of Rome was studiously concealed, lest the foes of the republic should be able to allure him to similar desertion by similar offerings. Hence also they sometimes even chained their gods to their pedestals, lest they should flee away and leave them.

Nor did the philosophers, by their teaching, correct this wild polytheism. On the contrary, they agreed in these three important particulars :—

1. All the philosophers, except those of the atheistical sects, agreed in admitting a plurality of gods. If some of

them occasionally speak of deity in the singular number, they speedily lapse into the error of the popular faith, and avow persuasions which sufficiently prove that they had no conception of the unity of the Divine Being.*

2. The ancient philosophers also agreed in limiting the attributes of their gods. The Deity was said neither to exercise nor to possess creative energy. Matter, uncreated and eternal, existed independently of the divine power. It was thus invested with the fundamental qualities of Divinity. The Deity was supposed to be obstructed in the formation of the world by the inaptitude of the materials to be shaped and arranged; and the defects and deformities, by which the universe was thought to be disgraced, were ascribed, not to His want of will, but to His want of power.

3. The popular creed of Greece and Rome was an extravagant Manicheism, in which demoniacal powers were mingled with divine. The philosophers adopted, but modified, the doctrine. An eternal and disorderly principle was supposed to interfere perpetually in the government of the world. The existence of moral evil was thus explained, the wisdom and goodness of the ruling god being subjected to a counter-acting and malignant power.

Such were the notions brought by the Romans into Britain respecting the divine character and government. The religious rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices which they practised, were in accordance with those views.

On this subject it is very difficult to speak, without either omitting what is necessary to give a correct idea of the religious rites of the Romans, or polluting our pages with recitals the most obscene and disgusting. It is true that, in early times, and occasionally afterward, some religious rites were celebrated among them, which had a tendency to afford

* "The philosophers made the theology of the Pagans look a little aristocratically, by their speaking so much of the gods in general, and without distinction; and attributing the government of the whole to them in common, as if it were managed and carried on by a common council and republic of gods, and as if their Jupiter or supreme god were no more among them than a Speaker of the House of Commons, or the Chairman of a Committee."—CUDWORTH'S "Intellectual System," p. 857.

relaxation and pleasure, without ministering to vice ; yet it must be admitted, that those which obtained the greatest popularity, and were by far more numerous and frequent, were of a very different character. It is astonishing that a people so refined as the Romans should tolerate and practise rites distinguished by the vilest extravagance, and the most wanton and unblushing effrontery. A case like this appears clearly to prove that no attainments in civilization, learning, or refinement, will save a people from the most abominable impurity of manners, unless they are in possession of a pure religion.

The rites of Bacchus were notorious for the most indecent spectacles, wanton exclamations, and open obscenities of the grossest descriptions. Here male and female votaries joined in the vilest orgies ; others exhibited every extravagance of gesture which was most likely to kindle the fury, or provoke the libertinism, of the surrounding multitude ; while “to think nothing unlawful was considered a grand maxim of religion.”*

The festival of the Lupercalia was scarcely less intemperate or offensive. The numerous priests by whom the shameless, but *holy*, ceremonies were to be performed, ran naked through the streets, and indulged, without reserve, in all the excesses permitted on the occasion. In this case, also, females, even of the higher ranks, mingled in the riot, undeterred by the grossness of a spectacle diametrically opposed to the purity of morals, and to all the sacred decencies of life.

The rites of Venus were celebrated with still greater excess. The more wanton the revelry, the more intense was the devotion. The grossest of passions were hurried into the very extremes of the most execrable sensuality. Rites of this kind were frequent and numerous. The inclinations and appetites of the people were indulged, till indulgence became a habit, and habit a necessity, and till it might have become politically hazardous to curtail or purify institutions which, in a moral point of view, it was so mischievous to maintain.

* LIVIUS, lib. xxxix. ; where see ample details.

Notwithstanding the great laxity of these opinions, and the impurity of the rites connected with them, the moral and religious responsibility of man was acknowledged ; and penances, sacrifices, and lustrations were frequently and regularly performed, as means of purging away the guilt of sin.

There are sufficient reasons for believing that in the early ages the Romans supposed human sacrifices to be pleasing to the gods. The story of Curtius, the self-sacrifice of the Decii, the symbolic sacrifice of human figures made of rushes at the Lemuria, afford ample evidence. One or two awful instances are also known, which belong to the later period of the Roman republic. At the beginning of the second Punic war, a man was buried alive, to conciliate the divine favour.* When the soldiers of Julius Cæsar attempted an insurrection at Rome, two of them were sacrificed to Mars, in the Campus Martius, by the pontifices and the *flamen martialis*, and their heads were stuck up in the regia.†

The principal sacrifices were those of animals, varying in their kind, according to the nature and character of the divinity to whom they were offered. In early times, it appears to have been the practice to burn the whole victim upon the altars of the gods ; but it afterward became the custom to consume only the legs, enclosed in fat, while its other parts were eaten at a festive meal. The gods were believed to delight chiefly in the smoke arising from the burning of animals ; and the greater the number of victims, the more pleasing was the sacrifice. Hence many animals were sometimes offered together, it not being uncommon to sacrifice one hundred bulls at once. In the early ages the princes, as the high priests of the people, killed the victim ; in later times this was done by priests set apart for that purpose. When the sacrifice was to be offered to the Olympian gods, the head of the animal was drawn toward heaven ; when to the gods of the lower world, to heroes, or to the

* DR. W. SMITH'S " Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities," sub voce *Sacrificium*.

† LIVII *Hist.*, lib. xxii., cap. 57.

dead, it was drawn downward. While the flesh was burning upon the altar, wine and incense were thrown upon it, and prayers and music accompanied the solemnity.

Various lustrations were likewise performed by bathing the whole or a part of the body. But those of which we have the most distinct information were always connected with sacrifices and other religious rites, and consisted in the sprinkling of water with a branch of laurel or olive, or by means of the *aspergillum*, and in the burning of certain materials, the smoke of which was supposed to have a purifying effect. When sacrifices were offered in connexion with a lustration, they appear to have been carried round the person or thing to be purified. The object of the greater part of the Roman lustrations was not, however, to expiate crime, but to obtain the blessing of the gods upon the persons or things lustrated. Thus fields were purified after sowing, and again before harvest. The shepherd, to preserve his flock from disease, or other evils, sprinkled them with waters, adorned the fold with branches and foliage, burnt pure sulphur and various herbs, and offered sacrifices to Pales. A fleet was lustrated before it put to sea : for this purpose altars were erected on the shore, and the vessels, manned with their troops, were drawn up in order close to the coast. Profound silence was observed ; and priests, standing close by the water, killed the victims, and carried the purifying sacrifices in small boats three times round the fleet. On these rounds they were accompanied by the generals, who prayed to the gods to preserve the armament from all dangers. Hereupon the priests divided the sacrifices into two parts, one of which was thrown into the sea, and the other burnt upon the altars, while the multitude around prayed to the gods.* All Roman armies also, before they took the field, were lustrated, and probably in the same manner. Every new colony was established by a lustration ; and the city of Rome itself, as well as other towns within its dominion, always underwent a similar ceremony after it had been visited by civil bloodshed, awful prodigies, or any

* LIVII *Hist.*, lib. xxxvi., cap. 42 ; lib. xxix., cap. 27.

other great and general calamity. In addition to this, the whole Roman people were subject to this rite at the close of every census, which occurred generally once in five years. On that occasion the censors performed a lustration in the Campus Martius.

We notice, next, the views which the Romans entertained of the soul and its future destiny, with the influence that their religion had on the state and prospects of society. Here, too, a melancholy absence of true knowledge is easily discovered. Much has been said in commendation of particular passages found in the writings of Plato, Cicero, and Seneca, respecting the immortality of the soul; and it is allowed, that some such occur, which, taken alone, would appear to exhibit tolerably clear views on this subject; yet it is equally evident, that all their force is destroyed by numbers of others, which express sometimes doubt and sometimes unbelief. It follows, therefore, that if the vigorous intellect of these ancient sages did on some occasions carry them above the darkness in which the surrounding population was involved, their reason had not firmness sufficient to hold fast the truth which it had reached,—that the pinion which carried them into fields of light could not maintain its elevation.

There is, however, a more probable way of accounting for those coruscations of truth which sparkle amid the darkness of ancient philosophy. God had from the beginning revealed to mankind a rich measure of religious truth, and had continued these revelations through the medium of the Israelites, who lived in the centre of the civilized world, and to whom the great and the learned of all nations had access. Nothing is, therefore, more likely, than that the philosophers of Greece and Rome should have gathered up these isolated truths, which were found floating away into oblivion, among old and neglected traditions, long after they had been obliterated from the public mind; or that the same knowledge should have been obtained from some intercourse with the Jews, or access to their sacred writings. The probability of this supposition is greatly strengthened by the fact, that

when those truths were enunciated, they did not even influence the mind of the philosopher himself, he on other occasions being the subject of the same doubts which filled the minds of the ignorant mass around him. The sentiments expressed even by Socrates, just before his death, afford a remarkable instance of this. The speech which he is said to have delivered to his judges, while it shows his self-command and pre-eminent powers of mind, affords at the same time afflicting testimony of the hesitating faith with which he had embraced the tenet of the immortality of the soul.

The nature of the soul, and its origin, were questions which were gravely and constantly discussed by the sages of Greece; and the most conflicting doctrines were propounded by different philosophers. At one moment the soul was nothing more than the heart, the blood, a portion of the brain, a particle of air, an organization of fire; at another, it was harmony, number, nothing, a quintessence without a name, a movement without end or beginning, a fifth element, which those who introduced were unable to define or comprehend.

The writings of Cicero represent in the most lively colours the ignorance, the errors, and the uncertainty of the ancient philosophers on this subject. When they were desirous of arming their disciples against the fear of death, they inculcated, as an obvious, though melancholy, position, that the fatal stroke of our dissolution releases us from the calamities of life, and that those can no longer suffer who no longer exist.* Nor could Cicero give any clearer information, though he had elicited, on this dark but important subject, all that Grecian philosophy and Roman good sense could possibly suggest. After labouring through the detail with a grave and philosophic accuracy, he coolly exclaims, "Which of these doctrines is true, a God only can decide; which is most probable, is a question of scarcely inferior difficulty."†

* GIBBON'S "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," book xv., chap. 2.

† ALLEY'S *Vindiciæ Christianæ*, p. 432.

We need not add to these remarks any lengthened examination of Roman poetry, with respect to its bearing on this subject. Virgil has indeed painted for our inspection a vivid picture of the future state of man; but it is too unintelligible and absurd to be relied upon, too gloomy and forbidding to administer any comfortable hope. His "shades," though visible to the eye, are impalpable to the touch. They are unearthly forms with earthly organs and appetites. With respect to their destiny and condition, every principle of equity and consistency is outraged. In the realms of Tartarus, indeed, notorious sinners are punished according to their crimes. But here the power of uninspired man failed; mercy commensurate with the moral frailties of man, even in what is called a virtuous condition, was beyond the grasp of the intellect to conceive, or of the feeling to suggest. Innumerable beings are therefore supposed to wander on the banks of the Styx a hundred years, not because of any sin which they have committed, but simply because their bodies have not been buried. With equal disregard of justice, the plains of mourning were peopled with innocence and guilt, alike sharing the same abode and the same misery. But the happy inhabitants of the Elysian fields, more than any other circumstance, show the unsatisfactory character of this destiny. While they have nothing but merely earthly pleasures to enjoy,* they are doomed after a season to drink the waters of Lethe, which obliterating from the mind all recollection of past events, they have then to return to earth to be they know not what.

If, therefore, after all the learned labour of the philosophers, as Seneca justly observes, "immortality, however desirable, was rather *promised* than *proved* by these great men;" and if poetic genius in its highest flights could form no idea of continued bliss, even for the greatest and best,

* "All the delights to which they were most attached on earth, and all the habits which they most indulged, are renewed and exercised without restraint. For the more warlike ghosts are provided shadowy chariots, horses, and arms; for the more gentle and voluptuous, feasts are spread in verdant meads. Others wrestle in amicable contest, or dance to harmonious sounds,"—ALEX' *Vindiciæ Christianæ*, p. 424.

after death ; what must have been the condition of the mass of the people, with regard to this awfully important point ? Can we wonder that they should have generally abandoned the idea of a future life, and have sat down in darkness, contemplating the grave as their eternal habitation, and sadly complaining in anticipation of their doom ?—

“Alas ! the tender herbs, and flowery tribes,
Though crush’d by winter’s unrelenting hand,
Revive and rise when vernal zephyrs call :
But we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
Bloom, flourish, fade, and fall ; and then succeeds
A long, long, silent, dark, oblivious sleep,
A sleep, which no propitious power dispels,
Nor changing seasons, nor revolving years.”*

It cannot be difficult to estimate the influence of such doctrines on the state and prospects of the mind. Where there was no settled confidence in the justice or mercy of the Deity, where there was no certain knowledge of the immortality of the soul, or of the principles upon which its present and future happiness would depend, there could be no real consolation derived, no good ground of hope furnished. Such, evidently, notwithstanding much superstitious devotedness to the rites, sacrifices, and ceremonies of their religion, was the real condition of the Roman people. Their afflictions were not only unalleviated, but often aggravated, by their religion. They were not certain of the protection of their gods ; nay, they might experience injustice from them. All this tended to produce a disregard of the future, an avidity for indulgence in present pleasures : “Better would it be,” said the tragedian, “to expire in infancy, or never to exist, than to be subject to the calamities by which man is encompassed ; but, since calamities abound and are unavoidable, let us indulge in pleasure while we may, and devote the season to revelry and joy, which may speedily terminate in pain and sorrow.”† This religion,

* MOSCHUS’s Epitaph on Bion, quoted by the Rev. Thomas Hartwell Horne, B.D., in his “Introduction,” vol. i., p. 10.

† SOPHOCLIS *Œdipus Coloneus*, as quoted in ALLEY’s *Vindicia Christiana*, p. 8.

therefore, affords little to strengthen the heart of afflicted man, or to encourage his hope of a happy futurity.

The doctrines taught at Rome respecting providence, morals, and the spirit of devotion, also require a brief notice.

That which has been already said respecting confidence and hope, applies with equal force to the doctrine of providence. For although the poets and teachers of Rome sometimes give correct and explicit intimations of the divine protection, goodness, and government ; yet the influence of those just principles is destroyed by other more prominent tenets, and obvious inferences, flowing from the character of the gods, and the relative position supposed to be occupied by man.

Almost in the same page in which a divine administration was unequivocally affirmed, the powers of chance or fortune, of necessity or fate, were announced and deified, as the invincible and eternal directors of the affairs of the universe.

The fatalist makes all things fixed and certain, and thus excludes government ; the polytheist gives up the government of the world to innumerable opposing and contrary wills, and thus makes everything uncertain. If the favour of one deity be propitiated, the wrath of another, equally or more powerful, may be provoked ; or the gods may quarrel among themselves. Such is the only providence which can be discovered in the *Iliad* of Homer, and the *Æneid* of Virgil ; poems which unquestionably embody the popular belief of the times in which they were written.*

Thus the people were left to fluctuate between a paramount destiny which controlled the gods, and presiding gods who controlled mankind. Nothing stable remained, on which religious trust might repose ; and, while the learned were left to wander from doubt to doubt, the ignorant were involved in the mischiefs of this pernicious uncertainty, and floated amid the billows of life, unsettled in their conviction of that power which lifted the threatening wave, or controlled the storm.

* ALLEY'S *Vindiciæ Christianæ*, p. 76 ; REV. RICHARD WATSON'S Works, vol. ix., p. 66.

“Think,” says Agrippa to the Roman people, “of that irresistible necessity, to which the gods themselves must submit.” “You deceive yourselves,” says Prometheus to the chorus in the tragedy : “fate is superior to wisdom, and Jupiter himself is governed by it.” “Fortune,” says Seneca, “rules without order the affairs of men, and blindly scatters her gifts over the world.” This language was of popular usage, and addressed to, and admitted by, the popular faith. It is evident, then, that the whole doctrine of providence was compounded of the most jarring elements ; and human belief, equally indeterminate and vague, was left to fluctuate between an omnipotent fatality without wisdom, and controlling gods without omnipotence.

The moral purity of any religion may fairly be admitted as a principal test of its truth. But in the application of this remark it is necessary to discriminate between the immorality which may be committed in violation of the authoritative commands of a true religion, and that which is indulged in under the sanction and allowance of a false one. We do not, therefore, refer to the immorality of the Roman people any farther than it appears to arise out of the defects or impurities of their religion. Before we give melancholy evidence of this, it is necessary to observe that our censure is by no means universal. For, notwithstanding the obvious defects which have been already pointed out, it must not be denied that a moral influence may have been sometimes exercised, and a moral purpose sometimes fulfilled, by that fanciful and extravagant system. Some part of it was deeply and indelibly impressed with the great outlines of practical truth ; and it enforced, with occasional beauty of language, those obvious duties of life by which society is to be regulated, and which every religious code in the world has, in a certain degree, proclaimed and sanctioned.

The existence of these elements of truth and righteousness in connexion with so much falsehood and impurity, is easily and satisfactorily accounted for. The pure patriarchal faith contained and enforced both the primitive doctrines of reli-

gion, and their corresponding morals: these, although corrupted by fancy and fable, (associated with human inventions, foolish, corrupt, and wicked,) continued to shed forth some rays of light, and to exercise some salutary influence, on the human mind through succeeding ages.

It must be obvious that the morality of the religion of Rome was poisoned at the very fountain-head. No faith can require from man a higher degree of moral excellence than is exhibited in the character of the Divinity which it calls him to adore: therefore, if the gods of Rome taught and authorized vice by their example, the same conduct would be naturally thought permissible in man. Thus the Roman might learn lessons of immorality at his very altars. A recital of the murder, adultery, injustice, licentiousness, and other crimes of which the principal deities were believed to have been guilty, may well be spared: they have already been exhibited more frequently and fully, perhaps, than is consistent with a due regard to the morals of the youth of our own country.

But the gods of this religion did not merely teach crime by example; they produced it by their influence. They are constantly exhibited as interfering to kindle evil passions, and to prompt the bad designs of mankind. When Alexander, after the death of Clito, lamented his crimes, the sophist consoled him by the assurance that he was impelled by a superior power. Phædra in her calamity ascribes her guilt to the wrath of Venus, kindled by the chastity of the unhappy Hippolytus; and Hercules, after he had murdered his wife and children, attributes the deed to the malignity of Juno, and derives his consolation from his impiety.

As we have already seen, many of the most popular religious rites tended still further to corrupt and debase the mind. They occupied in their observance all classes of the community; the girl, the matron, the boy, and the man. If the mind turns away sickened and disgusted from a contemplation of these scenes of impurity, what must have been the effect produced on the hearts of those who entered into all those gross and obscene ceremonies with passionate

ardour? Can we wonder, that, under such a system, principles and manners became alike impure?*

The spirit of devotion which the religion of the Romans cherished, presents an important subject for inquiry. Although it is by no means an easy task to convey explicit information on this branch of the subject, we may venture to offer a few observations on the true intent and character of their worship.

And here it may be observed, that many rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices, remained in use long after their important object had ceased to be recognised by the popular faith. However appropriate, therefore, in themselves to answer the great end of worship, there is much reason to fear that in consequence of their perverted character they, on the contrary, became ministers of evil. A careful and comprehensive survey of the whole subject tends irresistibly to impress the mind with the important fact, that, as far as religion concerned the mass of society, it was not a system of internal piety, but of external observances. The sacrifice was indispensable, but the sin might be retained. If the hecatomb was offered, it was evidently intended rather as a bribe to the gods, than as an acknowledgment of repentant crime. The result was, that all sound and salutary doctrines gave way to the formal and minute observances of an imposing superstition.

The ritual of worship was absurd. It sometimes required the sacrifice of human victims, at others the oblation of whole herds of cattle; at one time it was disgraced by barbarous exhibitions, at another rendered ridiculous by minute attention to external signs. It was immoral and licentious, as has been already proved; and if so, what devotional feelings could it excite? What worthy ideas of Deity could it foster? what abhorrence of sin? what consolation in trial? What virtuous purposes could be cherished under its influ-

* To such an extent was this awful influence exercised at Rome, that the senate were compelled to pass a law to prevent married ladies of the first families from publicly coming before the *Ædiles*, and enrolling their names in the lists of licensed prostitution!—See TACITUS, *Annal.*, lib. ii., cap. 85.

ence? Alas! if it is the office of devotion to lead man's thoughts from earth to heaven, from sin to purity, the faith and worship of Rome were ill calculated to cherish such a purpose. We have, indeed, on this subject, as on others, some beautiful sentiments in the pages of Roman writers; but here also these are almost unmeaning, and generally uninfluential, on account of the more powerful, controlling, and opposing influences which the dogmas and rites of their religion so abundantly furnished. In such circumstances, a rigid, superstitious zeal might occasionally have been produced, a careful and constant attention to ceremonial rites might have been rendered; but the religion of Rome presented a soil in which pure devotion could scarcely exist, and in which it could never flourish.

In concluding this sketch, it is necessary to give some information respecting the various classes of the Roman priesthood, or ministers of religion.

The priests were not a distinct order from the other citizens. The Romans, indeed, had not the same regulations with respect to public employments as now obtain with us. With them the same person might regulate the police of the city, direct the affairs of the empire, propose laws, act as a judge or priest, and command an army. The priests may be divided into two distinct classes, as some of them were common to all the gods, while others were set apart to the service of a particular deity.

Of the first class, the principal were the *Pontifices*. This order was instituted by Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome. Their number, originally, was five; which was afterwards increased by several additions, until at the time of the Cæsars it amounted to fifteen or sixteen. This body was denominated *collegium*. They exercised the chief superintendence over all matters of religion, and all things and persons connected with public or private worship. To their care were also intrusted the books containing the ritual ordinances of religion. It was their duty to give information to all who requested it, respecting holy rites and ordinances. They had also to guard against any irregularity in sacred

observances which might arise from the neglect of ancient customs, or the introduction of foreign ceremonies. It formed part of their office, not only to determine in what manner the gods should be worshipped, but also the proper form of burials, how the manes of the departed were to be appeased, and what signs either in lightning or other phenomena were to be received and considered. With them rested the judicial decision in all matters of religion; and where existing laws or customs were found to be defective, they made new regulations according to their own judgment. They determined the forms of worship and of sacrificing, and watched over the conduct of all persons who took any part in these solemn duties. Their power was, therefore, very great, especially as they were subject neither to the senate nor to the people, but could of themselves punish with fines all those who neglected their mandates, according to the magnitude of the offence.

The chief of the *Pontifices*, entitled *Pontifex maximus*, was the president of this body, and acted in its name. He was generally chosen from among the most distinguished persons. The office was filled, among others, by Julius Cæsar, Lepidus, and Augustus. The College of the Pontiffs continued until the overthrow of Paganism.

The Augurs constituted another class of persons, whose office was sacred, and open to all aspirants. Their origin is lost in the antiquity of the Roman state. In its strict sense, the term meant, "a diviner by birds;" but it was afterward extended to embrace the entire observation of supernatural signs. In addition to this, the Augurs had to advise on the expiation of prodigies, and other matters of religious observance.

The Augurship is described by Cicero, himself an Augur, as the highest dignity of the state, having an authority which could not only prevent resolutions from passing in the senate, but also annul those already passed, if the auspices had not been duly performed. The words, *Alio die*, from a single Augur, might put a stop to all business; and laws had several times been rescinded by a decree of the College.

At first the Augurs are supposed to have been three in number; afterward one more was added, and then another addition of five took place; and lastly Sylla increased the number to fifteen.

The chief of the Augurs was called *magister collegii*. The Augurs enjoyed this singular privilege, that, even when convicted of the greatest crime, they could not be deprived of their office; and as they were elected for life, their duties were permanent. Plutarch assigns as a reason for this,—that they were intrusted with the secrets of the empire.

As the Pontiffs prescribed solemn forms and ceremonies, so the Augurs explained all omens. They derived tokens of future events chiefly from five sources; that is, from appearances in the heavens, as thunder or lightning, from the singing or flight of birds, from the eating of chickens, from the motions of quadrupeds, and from uncommon accidents.

The College of Augurs possessed greater power in the earlier than in the latter days of the republic. The old legends delighted to tell of the triumphs of religion. The first kings of Rome were Augurs, and Romulus was believed to have founded the empire by direct intimation from heaven. Cicero laments the decline of the art in his day. The College of Augurs was finally abolished by the emperor Theodosius; but so deeply was the superstition rooted, that, even in the fourteenth century, a Christian bishop found it necessary to issue an edict against it.

The *Decemviri sacris faciundis*, or simply *Decemviri sacrorum*, were the members of another priestly College. They had the care of the Sibylline Books,* and inspected them, by

* A certain woman, called Amalthæa, from a foreign country, is said to have come to Tarquinius Superbus, wishing to sell nine books of Sibylline or prophetic oracles. Upon the king's refusing to purchase them, she went away, burnt three of them, and returned, demanding the same sum for the six. The king again refused; when she burnt three more, and demanded the original price for the remaining three. Amazed at this conduct, Tarquin consulted the Augurs, who advised the immediate purchase of the oracles. Pliny says that she burnt two books, and that but one was bought. These books were supposed to contain the fate of the Roman empire; and therefore, in public danger or calamity, the keepers of them were frequently commanded by the senate to inspect their contents.

the appointment of the senate, on all important occasions. This class of priests was exempted from the obligation of serving in the army, and their office was for life. Although as a College their duties stood connected with the general interests of the nation, they were properly and specially devoted to the service of Apollo.

The *Epulones* formed another College of priests. They were originally three in number, but afterward were increased to seven. It was the custom among the Romans to decree feasts to the gods, especially to Jupiter. These sacred entertainments became so numerous, that the Pontiffs, who at first had them under their care, could no longer attend to them; on which account this order of priests was instituted to take charge of these observances.

The Pontiffs, Augurs, Decenviri, and Epulones, formed the four great religious corporations of Rome. There were other fraternities of priests, composed of persons of high rank, but whose official dignity was less considerable. Among the chief of these were the following:—the *Arvales Fratres*, twelve in number, who were appointed to offer sacrifices for the fertility of the ground. The *Curiones* were priests who performed the sacred rites in the several wards (or *curiæ*) of the city of Rome. They were thirty in number, one to each ward, forming together a College of thirty priests, over whom one of their number presided, who was thence called *Curio Maximus*. The *Fetiales* were a College of priests who acted as the guardians of the public faith. It was their function, when any dispute arose with a foreign state, to demand satisfaction, to determine the circumstances under which hostilities might be commenced, to perform the various religious rites attendant on the solemn declaration of war, and to preside at the formal ratification of peace. These were the principal priests whose various offices arose out of the several services to which they were devoted, being common to all the gods.

The priests of particular deities were called *Flamines*, from a cap or fillet which they wore on their head. The most dignified were those of Jupiter, Mars, Pan, and Quirinus;

beside whom there were numerous others. The principal of these enjoyed many peculiar honours, but were subject to several restrictions.

It is also necessary to notice the Vestal Virgins. These were the priestesses of Vesta, who ministered in her temple, and watched the perpetual fire which burnt on her altar. Their origin was very ancient, since Rhea Silvia, the mother of Romulus, was one of this sisterhood. They were six in number. These virgins were chosen from the children of the common people between the ages of six and sixteen, and the period of service extended to thirty years ; during which time they were bound by a solemn vow of chastity, the violation of which was punished with a terrible death.

We have thus noticed the principal features of the religion of the Romans. The reader will perceive that, however preposterous and absurd many of its doctrines were, and although its rites were for the most part impure, nevertheless the system itself was very elaborate, and its institutions so inwrought with the entire texture of their political and social relations, that its influence on the public mind was immense. Indeed, it has been questioned, whether any people were ever more observant of the requirements of their religion than the Romans. Nor will this excite much surprise, when the remark just made is taken in connexion with the adaptation of the spirit and genius of this faith to the habits, manners, and dispositions of a warlike, licentious, and superstitious people.

Such then were the religious doctrines, rites, and institutions which, being received at Rome, were disseminated from the imperial city to every part of the immense empire. Wherever the Roman legions marched, they carried with them this faith, and raised altars to these gods. Wherever colonies were founded, or conquests made, these rites and observances were established. And this, too, at the most critical point of time in the religious history of the world,—at that time when our earth, enveloped in moral darkness, was visited in Divine mercy by “the day-spring from on high,” when “the Lord visited and redeemed His people”

by the incarnation and death of His Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Romans, who professed this religion, are the people concerning whom the apostle declares, "When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful ; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves : who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever." (Rom. i. 21-25.) This is an inimitable description of the religion which the Romans introduced into Britain.

So long as the soldiers of Rome carried on a war with the Britons merely as invaders, the influence of their religion would be scarcely felt, it being confined to the fortified camps of the legionaries. But when, through the prudent policy of Agricola, the Romans learned to govern as well as to conquer, it must have been brought into juxtaposition with the religion of the Britons. It should be remembered, too, that this took place under circumstances the most favourable for the spread of the polytheistic idolatry of Italy. It was the religion of the conquerors, of those who evidently possessed art, science, refinement, and riches, far beyond any thing known at that time among the inhabitants of this island. Here, then, was a religion supported by power, and recommended by every influence likely to give it favour in the estimation of the Britons ; and, further, when this occurred, the Druids who had for ages been the teachers, the priests, the depositaries of the patriarchal British faith, were a proscribed class. The Romans, aware of the influence which they exercised over the Britons, and knowing their patriotism and their power, directed very special efforts against them, until their sacred places were laid

in the dust, and they were themselves either destroyed or driven from the exercise of their office. We need not wonder, therefore, that the religion of Rome should soon afterwards have gradually extended its influence in this country; and especially as we have seen that in the lapse of ages the principles of the Druids had lost much of their pristine purity, and thus prepared the public mind to receive the corruptions imported from Rome.

There can be no doubt that, as Roman influence, manners, and government extended through the island, the Roman religion would certainly follow. On this subject, indeed, but little information has been preserved; yet enough remains to prove that this was the case, and to show that those fragments which have come down to our time, exhibit but a very small portion of the power and influence which the religion of Rome exerted on the inhabitants of Britain.

We are told that a temple, dedicated to Diana, stood on the site of St. Paul's cathedral in London, and one, sacred to Apollo, at Westminster, where the abbey now stands; that there was a temple consecrated to Victoria or Andate at Maldon, and one to Minerva at Bangor; and that Bellona had one at York, and Janus one at Leicester. Apollo, moreover, is said to have had one temple at Bath, and another in Cornwall, in which county a temple to Mercury is also supposed to have stood. All this clearly shows, that the polytheism of Rome had widely extended in Britain, and that the inhabitants in general, during the last period of the Roman government, had sunk into the idolatry and licentiousness of the imperial city, while they copied her elegancies, and tried to attain to her intellectual grandeur, and to indulge in her abounding luxury.

CHAPTER V.

THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

DURING the interval that elapsed between the last invasion of Britain by Julius Cæsar, and the efforts made by Claudius to subdue it, an event took place of unparalleled importance to mankind. This was the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, the promised Redeemer of the world. Both his mother and her husband were lineally descended from the regal house of David; and the Saviour was born during the reign of Augustus Cæsar. The whole Jewish economy typified His mission and sacrificial death. All the prominent particulars of His history had been distinctly predicted by the prophets; and even the precise time and place of His birth were unambiguously foretold. Yet, when He appeared, although numerous miracles attested the Divinity of His character, He was slighted, persecuted, and crucified. For some time after the ascension of the Saviour, the Gospel was preached only to the Jews; but, when specially called thereto by the Holy Spirit, Peter proclaimed its glad tidings to Gentiles in the house of Cornelius at Cæsarea. This took place A.D. 41, just about the time when Caligula was slain, and Claudius Cæsar succeeded to the imperial dignity. It appears, therefore, very clear, that the Gospel could not have been preached in this country until after that time.

There is scarcely any point on which a Christian inquirer would desire more explicit information than on the question, "When, and by whose instrumentality, was the light of truth first disseminated among the benighted inhabitants of our father-land?" From the slender data within our reach, we can scarcely hope for such ample and satisfactory information on this subject as is most desirable. Yet it will not be difficult to remove much obscurity from this portion of Christian history, and to give at least a probable account of

the introduction of Christianity into Britain, and its progress amongst the inhabitants during the period of its subjection to the Roman domination.

As a starting-point we venture to fix upon the fact which we have just now elicited, namely, that the Gospel was not preached in Britain before the reign of Claudius. It has, indeed, been surmised, on the authority of a passage in Gildas, that the Christian religion was planted here during the reign of Tiberius. The passage is as follows: "Meanwhile these islands, stiff with cold and frost, and in a distant region of the world, remote from the visible sun, received the beams of light, that is, the holy precepts of Christ,—who is the true Sun, and who shows the whole world His splendour, not only from the temporal firmament, but from the height of heaven, which surpasses everything temporal,—at the latter part, as we know, of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, by whom His religion was propagated without impediment, and death threatened to those who interfered with its professors."* It appears, however, from these words of Gildas, as has been satisfactorily shown by Stillingfleet,† that they do not, as some have supposed, state that the Gospel light shone in Britain during the reign of Tiberius, but rather, that the writer speaks of a double shining of the Gospel, one more general to the world, the other more particular to this island. The former, he says, was near the close of the reign of Tiberius; the latter was "meanwhile," the time of which he speaks.‡ This opinion is amply supported by facts. As the Romans had effected no occupation of the island before the invasion under Aulus Plautius, in the reign of Claudius, it must be evident that the Britons were much more difficult of access *before* than *after* that period; for, when Roman stations had been established, there must of necessity have been a constant intercourse between Rome and this island. In such circumstances, therefore, clear and explicit evidence is necessary to prove any very early evan-

* DR. GILES'S Translation of Gildas, sect. viii.

† *Origines Britannicæ*, p. 5.

‡ Gildas refers to the time of the Boadicean insurrection.

gelization of Britain. But, in addition to this, it appears to be correct to conclude, that, if this meaning is put on the words of Gildas, the Gospel must have been preached in this country *at least three years before the conversion of Cornelius*, who is clearly exhibited in Scripture as “the first-fruits of the Gentiles.” If there had been no doubt respecting the words of Gildas, his authority alone would scarcely have been sufficient to establish the point; but, as it is, the opinion deduced from them seems to be utterly groundless.

It will now be necessary to examine the various notions which have been entertained respecting the persons by whom the glad tidings of salvation through Christ were primarily communicated to the inhabitants of this island.

It has been supposed by some persons, that the Apostle Peter first taught the Britons the Christian faith. This notion, says Stillingfleet, “some writers of our Church History have endeavoured, for particular reasons, to prove; but their proofs are very slight and inconsiderable. The object of these efforts is sufficiently evident; for, if it could be shown that Peter had by his personal ministry founded the British church, it would be thought a conclusive reason for its entire submission to the authority of those who claim to be successors of this apostle.” In favour of this opinion, however, we have no evidence worthy of credit. Parsons the Jesuit has, indeed, argued in its support; but all that he has said may be reduced to these three particulars: Gildas, speaking of the British church, calls it “the chair of St. Peter,” an expression from which no evidence on the subject can be elicited, when the claims of Rome in the sixth century are considered. Also Simeon Metaphrastus, who lived A.D. 900, is quoted as saying, “that Peter stayed some time in Britain; where having preached the word, established churches, ordained bishops, priests, and deacons, in the twelfth year of Nero he returned to Rome.” It might be a sufficient reply to this to say, that the testimony of this writer on this subject is distrusted by those who on other occasions praise him. But it must also be remembered that, after the conversion of Cornelius, and the com-

mencement of Paul's apostolical career, Peter appears to have directed his labours specially to the Jews. Hence he is said to have had "the Gospel of the circumcision" committed unto him. Besides, this solitary witness is not only utterly unsupported by primitive antiquity, but is quite opposed to the general tenor of the best evidence which exists respecting this apostle's life and labours.

It is further urged that St. Peter himself, in a vision to a person in the days of king Edward the Confessor, reported that he had preached the word in Britain. Perhaps this is *AS GOOD evidence as any which has been assigned*; but to it Fuller archly objects: "To this vision *pretended* of Peter, we oppose the *certain* words of Paul, '*Neither give heed to fables.*'"

Besides Peter, James, the son of Zebedee,* and Simon the Canaanite, surnamed Zelotes, are severally reported to have introduced the Gospel into this island; but as these opinions are not supported by any historical evidence, or even by any plausible conjecture, it will not be necessary further to allude to them. Other statements require more particular attention.

Perhaps none of the legendary narratives handed down to us on this subject have obtained greater celebrity, than that which attributes the first preaching of the Gospel in Britain to Joseph of Arimathea and his eleven companions. The substance of this account is here subjoined:—The Jews, entertaining particular enmity against Philip, Joseph of Arimathea, Lazarus, Mary Magdalene and Martha his sisters, with Marcella their servant, banished them out of Judea; and, putting them into a vessel without sails or oars, sent them thus unprovided to sea, intending their destruction. Yet this company, after having been tossed about with tempests, at length safely reached Marseilles in France. Here Philip remained preaching the Gospel, and sent Joseph of Arimathea, with Joseph his son, and ten other associates, over into Britain, to convert the inhabitants of this island to Christianity. At what part these good people landed, we

* James was slain by order of Herod, A.D. 44.

are not informed ; but the first scene of their mission is laid in Somersetshire, where they obtained the protection of the king Arviragus, who allowed them to build a church, and gave them twelve hides of land for their support ; which were situated in what was then a desolate island, the site of the present Glastonbury. Here they built a small church, and surrounded it with a yard. By the direction of the angel Gabriel, it was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. In this church it is said that Joseph was buried ; and here those persons lived many years, devoutly serving God, and converting many to the Christian religion.

It will not be necessary at any length to show the fabulous character of this entire narrative. We therefore briefly observe : 1. Here is an evident want of sufficiently ancient testimony. No writer of credit before the Conquest makes any mention of Joseph's coming hither ; * nor have we a single confirmation of it,—notwithstanding the numerous charters and documents to which reference has been made,—that does not appear to have been originally taken from the Glastonbury legends,† in support of this account. 2. The circumstances are altogether most improbable. The dedication of the church to the Virgin by the direction of Gabriel, will at once be attributed to monkish ignorance and superstition, and must be acknowledged to be an invention of much later times ; for in the days of the apostles we hear of no such extravagant regard to the mother of the Saviour. The churchyard surrounding the church, and the burial of Joseph within the building, also prove that the account is of much later date than the time to which it is referred ; for, although there were several churches in Britain in the first ages of the Christian religion, there was no such thing as the appurtenance of a churchyard till the time of Cuthbert, archbishop of Canterbury, who died A.D. 798. And, as Sir Henry Spelman asks, “ What ancient writer ever told us of any persons buried in churches at that time of day ? Or where do we read of churches being dedicated to the saints

* FULLER'S “ Church History of Britain,” vol. i., p. 13. 8vo. London.

† STILLINGFLEET, *Origines Britannicæ*, p. 2.

in the first century? or that the Blessed Virgin was addressed in a religious manner by any of her contemporaries?" And then, as to consecrating the church, there is no notice taken of it in any records of that age, nor for about five hundred years after, till St. David, who was made archbishop of the see since called by his name, A.D. 519, happened to dream of this wonderful relation.* It must be further evident, that the retired and eremitical way of living ascribed to these persons is not agreeable to the manners of the earliest ages. The Christians of their time did not affect such habits of seclusion. We find no traces of these monastic retreats till the Diocletian persecution: it was then that the Christians first retired into the deserts of Egypt; it not being choice, but necessity, which drove them from towns and cities, and made them live remote from the sphere of social intercourse.† 3. The story of Joseph, as it comes to our hand, is also opposed to history; for while it states that St. Philip came from Judea into France, the best authors inform us that he journeyed into Upper Asia, and finally suffered martyrdom in Hierapolis.‡ Nor can we find a more satisfactory accordance between it and British annals. For, on looking carefully into the condition of South Britain at the time to which this legend has reference, we find no such prince as Arviragus, nor indeed any place for the exercise of his authority; it being evident that at the period of which the tradition speaks, A.D. 63, the entire of South Britain, at least as far west as Glastonbury, was subdued and formed into a Roman province.§ We perceive, therefore, that this account is evidently fabulous; for, although we do not presume to affirm that Joseph of Arimathea did not visit our island, it is very evident that this relation of his coming, if it has any particle of truth in it, has it

* COLLIER'S "Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain," vol. i., p. 23. 8vo. London, 1840.

† *Ibid.*, p. 24.

‡ CAVE'S "Lives of the Apostles," p. 383. London, 1841. EUSEBIUS, p. 100. London, 1838.

§ COLLIER'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 25. STILLINGFLEET'S *Origines*, p. 30.

buried beneath a mass of superstitious fable of comparatively modern invention. This elicited from the witty Fuller the observation :—" As this relation of Joseph is presented unto us, it hath a young man's brow with an old man's beard ; I mean, novel superstitions, disguised with pretended antiquity." *

Another tradition states, that the Gospel was introduced into Britain by a king called Lucius ; who, having heard of Christianity, sent two of his courtiers to the bishop of Rome, requesting to be favoured with information respecting its laws and doctrines. The most approved account of this is copied from the old " Book of Llandaff," and is here subjoined : " That king Lucius sent Elvanus and Medevinus to Eleutherius, the twelfth bishop of Rome, to desire that he might be made a Christian by his instruction. Upon which, the Pope gave God thanks, that such a Heathen nation were so earnest in their applications for Christianity. And then, by advice of the priests of the city of Rome, they first baptized these ambassadors, and afterwards, instructing them more fully in the principles of the Christian faith, they proceeded to ordain them, making Elvanus a bishop, and Medevinus a teacher ; and they, being thus qualified, returned to king Lucius ; who, with the chief of the Britons, were baptized ; and then, according to the form of Eleutherius's instructions, the ecclesiastical order was settled, bishops were ordained, and the Christian religion further propagated among the inhabitants."† To this account Geoffry of Monmouth adds : " These holy doctors," meaning Faganus and Dervianus, " when they had cleared the greatest part of Britain of Heathenism, procured many of the Pagan temples to be consecrated to the honour of the true God, having first removed out of them the relics of idolatry and false worship. There were then in Britain eight-and-twenty Flamens, and three Arch-Flamens, who, in conformity to the Pagan rites elsewhere, used to offer incense and sacrifice cattle to their pretended deities. These ceremonies of

* FULLER'S " Church History," vol. i., p. 14.

† COLLIER'S " Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 29.

Heathenism being suppressed, and all things governed by the standard of Christianity, they consecrated bishops in the room of the Flamens, and archbishops in the jurisdiction of the Arch-Flamens."*

This account has also called forth a great diversity of opinion from different eminent authors. Yet, whatever difficulty there may be in deciding on the various particulars which it involves, we may safely conclude, that we have here some measure at least of historical truth. That there was a sovereign prince called Lucius, cannot be doubted : not only is the fact attested by the existence of the preceding account ; but Nennius, who lived in the beginning of the seventh century, positively affirms, that, after the birth of Christ one hundred and sixty-seven years, king Lucius, with all the chiefs of the British people, received baptism in consequence of a legation sent by the Roman emperors and pope Euavistes."† The existence of this prince being admitted, it is not so easy to fix his residence, and the character and extent of his government. For while some writers maintain, that Lucius reigned over the Iceni, others contend, that his dominions were beyond the Roman wall ; and a third class suppose that he ruled in some part of the Roman province, subject to the imperial government. It may not be possible to decide these points with perfect accuracy, neither is it important to do so ; yet we incline to the opinion advocated by a late writer, who labours to show that Lucius reigned in Wales ; that his kingdom included only Monmouth and a part of Glamorgan ; but that, being descended from a race of princes, who had in former ages been elected to exercise sovereign power over the confederated Britons, he might perhaps, among his own people, be honoured with the style and title of "king of the Britons." According to this author, he is the same with Llés, the son of Coil. His proper name was Lleirog. The Triads describe him as one of the three blessed princes of the Isle of Britain, who built the first church in Llandav, which was

* GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH, book iv., chap. 19.

† NENNIUS, sect. xxii.

the first in the Isle of Britain; and who gave the privilege of the country and tribe, with civil and ecclesiastical rights, to those who professed faith in Christ.* According to these old British authorities, he was fourth in descent from the great Caractacus.†

Yet, if it be right to receive that part of the narrative as correct, it by no means follows that the whole of it is entitled to credence. On the contrary, we may believe, that a British prince, reigning in Wales, had heard of Christianity, and had even sent to Rome for the purpose of obtaining further acquaintance with its doctrines, and that, on obtaining this, he heartily embraced the Gospel, and built a church for divine worship: but all this affords no reason for believing *that* to have been the first introduction of Christianity into Britain, but the reverse. For it is apparent, on the face of the account itself, that some information of Christianity must have preceded this application to Rome. By whose instrumentality was this information brought? Nothing is more evident than that the Gospel was introduced into this island during the first century, while this event is generally placed about A.D. 164 or 167.

The pretended letter of Pope Eleutherius to king Lucius, although it has been regarded as very important, has betrayed evident marks of modern invention, when subjected to rigid scrutiny by Sir Henry Spelman and other antiquaries; ‡ and, on the whole, we are compelled to conclude, that this case also exhibits ample proof that the simple (and of itself unimportant) circumstance of a British prince having communicated with Rome as one of the nearest primitive churches, for the purpose of obtaining some further knowledge of Christianity,—is made the basis on which to accumulate a mass of fiction and fable; for such we must esteem the various additions which have been made to the narrative.

* Triad xxxv.

† HUGHES'S *Horæ Britannicæ*, vol. ii., p. 46. The respected and learned author of these volumes died during the progress of the first edition of this little work through the press.

‡ COLLIER'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 35.

But, however painful it may be to arrive at such a conclusion, the design of all this is abundantly evident. It was to make the church of Christ in Britain dependent on the church of Rome;—to endeavour, by means neither honourable nor honest, to display an acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Romish see in the early ages;—and thus to bolster up the absurd and unscriptural claims of Popery. In this case, however, the attempt has signally failed; for, excepting the simple facts already adduced, it may be truly affirmed, in the words of an eminent author, “that it is almost equally ridiculous to draw any serious consequences from this extravagant story, or to take any pains in refuting it; since every one who knows anything of the state of Britain at the time, knows that it contains as many falsehoods and impossibilities as sentences.” *

Next in order, we notice the report, that the Gospel was preached in Britain by the apostle Paul. Being without any clear and explicit testimony as to the fact, still there is a sufficient amount of probability in it to excite much respect and attention. If we follow this apostle until his first imprisonment at Rome, we cannot but be struck with the remarkable declaration which he made to the Christians at Ephesus: “I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the word of God, shall see my face no more.” (Acts xx. 25.) As it has been well observed, these words can scarcely be supposed to refer exclusively to the Ephesians; for if the apostle visited other parts of Asia Minor, we can conceive no reason why he might not have again seen them: these expressions may be considered, therefore, as intimating that his ministrations in the eastern countries had terminated. It also appears evident, that on this occasion St. Paul does not give utterance to any mere apprehension or opinion; but makes the statement as if with full and perfect knowledge from revelation. After his imprisonment of two years at Rome, he was released; and if from this time about eight years elapsed before his second imprisonment, as appears to have been satisfactorily shown by

* DR. HENRY’S “History of Great Britain,” vol. i., p. 139.

Bishop Stillingfleet from ancient authors, the question occurs, "Where was this time spent?" That it was occupied in preaching the Gospel of Christ, we cannot for a moment doubt. That he returned to the East, appears very improbable, whether we consider his declaration to the Ephesian elders, or his fixed resolve "to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named," that they "to whom He was not spoken of might see, and they that had not heard might understand." (Rom. xv. 20, 21.) It is also important to consider, in connexion with the passage above quoted, that this apostle had asserted his strong desire to "take a journey into Spain" after he had visited Rome. We have already shown, that he had time and opportunity for accomplishing this design; and, to complete this chain of probabilities, we have several important testimonies in the writings of early Christian authors, entirely unconnected with Britain, showing that what appears to be thus probable was actually performed. Theodoret declares, that St. Paul, after his release at Rome, went to Spain; and thence carried the light of the Gospel to other nations. St. Jerome says, that "St. Paul, having been in Spain, went from one ocean to another, imitating the motion and course of the Sun of righteousness." The same writer elsewhere adds, that "St. Paul, after his imprisonment, preached the Gospel in the western parts." Clemens Romanus likewise states, that "St. Paul preached righteousness through the whole world; and, in doing this, went to the utmost bounds of the West."* These last expressions were usually understood to include the British islands: and in this sense, when speaking of Cæsar's expedition into Britain, Plutarch says, that "he was the first to bring a fleet into the western ocean," meaning the sea between Gaul and Britain. Now, although we do not contend, that these intimations and collateral circumstances amount to a proof that St. Paul did certainly preach the Gospel in this island, yet they render the supposition very probable. It also may be given as a hypothetical conclusion, that if ever the Britons were favoured with the personal

* STILLINGFLEET'S *Origines Britannicæ*, p. 38.

ministry of an apostle, it was with that of the apostle of the Gentiles. No such amount of evidence can be given in favour of the visit of any other of "the Twelve" to this country.

The following testimonies, therefore, which go to show that the Gospel was undoubtedly preached in Britain during apostolic times, tend greatly to strengthen the presumption that St. Paul did actually visit this island.

Tertullian, who wrote about the middle of the second century, after having stated the great progress made by the Gospel, and enumerated several countries through which it had been spread, adds: "But also all the boundaries of the Spaniards, all the different nations of Gaul, and those parts of Britain inaccessible to the Romans."*

The learned Origen, who flourished about A.D. 220, in his Homily on Ezekiel, particularly referring to the animating declaration, "The whole earth shall shout for joy," and alluding to the success of the Gospel, asks: "At what time before the advent of Christ did the land of Britain agree in the worship of one God?"†

The testimony of Theodoret, although he wrote much later, about A.D. 423, is remarkably explicit. He says, "Those our fishermen, and publicans, and our tent-makers, have propagated the Gospel among all nations: not only among the Romans, and those who are subjects of the Roman empire, but among the Scythians, and the Sauro-matæ, the Indians, also the Ethiopians, the Persians, the Hyrcani, *the Britons*, the Cimmerii, and the Germans."

But the testimony which appears most important, is that of Eusebius. He was a learned and inquisitive person, a great favourite with Constantine, the first Christian emperor; and possessed all the talent and advantages calculated to give weight to his evidence. For he not only enjoyed the friendship of his prince, who, having been born and proclaimed emperor in Britain, must be supposed to have had an intimate acquaintance with this country; but he was also

* HUGHES'S *Horæ Britannicæ*, vol. ii., p. 3.

† DR. CLARKE'S Works, vol. xiii., p. 24.

present at the first Council of Nice, whither bishops were summoned from every part of the empire, from whom he would have the means of learning much respecting the introduction of Christianity into the countries to which they severally belonged. Nor was Eusebius inattentive to subjects of this kind: on the contrary, he had devoted the energies of his cultivated mind to the compilation of a history of the early church. Consequently, he would be likely to devise the best means in his power for procuring the most accurate and multifarious information; and, having procured it, he would endeavour to place it clearly and correctly upon record.

Eusebius, thus well-qualified, when writing concerning the countries in which the apostles had laboured, enumerates "the Romans, Persians, Armenians, Parthians, Indians, Scythians;" and he then adds particularly, that "some passed over the ocean to those which are called *the British islands*:" whence he concludes, that "some more than human power did accompany the apostles." To this we may add, if any addition be necessary, the assertion of our oldest British church writer, Gildas, who was born upon the day of the famous battle of Badon Mount, which was fought A.D. 520, and whose language, taken in its utmost latitude, makes the introduction of the Gospel into Britain to precede the insurrection under Boadicea, which took place A.D. 61.

A learned writer, reviewing this evidence, pronounces a very decided judgment, which, although beyond what we venture to assert, we quote as deserving great attention: "That St. Paul did go to Britain, we may collect from the testimony of Clemens Romanus, Theodoret, and Jerôme; who relate, that, after his imprisonment, he preached the Gospel in the *western parts*; that he brought salvation to *the islands that lie in the ocean*; and that in preaching the Gospel he went to the *utmost bounds of the West*. What was meant by *the West*, and the *islands that lie in the ocean*, we may judge from Plutarch, Eusebius, and Nicephorus, who call the British Ocean the *western*; and again from Nice-

phorus, who says, that one of the apostles ‘went to the extreme countries of the ocean, and the British Isles;’ but especially from the words of Catullus, who calls Britain the *utmost island* of the West; and from Theodoret, who describes the Britons as inhabiting the *utmost parts* of the West. When Clement, therefore, says that Paul went to the *utmost bounds of the West*, we do not conjecture, but are sure, that he meant Britain, not only because Britain was so designated, but because Paul could not have gone to the utmost bounds of the West without going to Britain. It is almost unnecessary, therefore, to appeal to the express testimony of Venantius Fortunatus and Sophronius, for the apostle’s journey to Britain.”

Venantius Fortunatus, quoted by Godwin, says, *Sophronius patriarcha Hierosolymitanus disertis verbis asserit Britanniam nostram eum invisisse.** “Sophronius, the patriarch of Jerusalem, asserts in express terms, that St. Paul visited our Island of Britain.”

Hence, it appears to be a well-established fact, that the Gospel was preached, and a Christian church founded, in Britain, during the apostolic age. Nor need we greatly wonder at this circumstance; for although, at first sight, some persons may be disposed to consider Britain at that day too unimportant to attract the attention of an apostle from the continent; yet, if we fairly consider the concomitants of the fact, all demur concerning it will be removed. The successive attempts of Julius Cæsar to subdue Britain, which at that time was regarded with much curiosity as the partially-known extremity of the western world, excited intense interest at Rome, and public attention was directed to this island and to its brave inhabitants, during two of the most eventful centuries concerning which history has left any records. This interest was maintained and increased by continued intercourse with Britain, by the absurd conduct of Caligula, and especially by the invasion of this country w th

* BURGESS’s “Seven Epochs of the Ancient British Church,” p. 7, as quoted in Taylor’s octavo edition of Calmet’s Dictionary, p. 301, article *Christianity*.

a powerful armament in the reign of Claudius. Nor can it be doubted that the personal visit of this prince to the island, his victory, and the triumph at Rome by which it was subsequently celebrated, must have elevated Britain highly in the estimation of the Roman people, who began to reckon it as one of the most important conquests which they had ever achieved. All this would be strengthened and perpetuated by the capture of the gallant Caractacus and his family. It was about A.D. 52 that these events took place ; after which, in all probability, the British prince and his family resided at Rome. Now if, as Bishop Stillingfleet argues, St. Paul arrived in Rome in the second or third year of Nero's reign, that is, A.D. 55 or 56, does it not seem to be a matter of the highest probability, that he who was pre-eminently the apostle of the Gentiles must have had his attention called to the circumstances and condition of the Britons ? Could a mind so cultivated and energetic as his was, have remained ignorant of those extraordinary and stirring events which had so recently occurred in this country, and which had become subjects of conversation and discussion in every part of the vast Roman empire ? or, knowing them, could he, whose heart burned to proclaim Christ and His Gospel to every human being, have been unaffected or uninfluenced by these circumstances ?

We are told that St. Paul, during his imprisonment at Rome, "dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." (Acts xxviii. 30, 31.) As it is evident that, during this time, he was instrumental in bringing many to an acquaintance with the Gospel, Bishop Stillingfleet conjectures that some of the British captives might be of the number. His words are : "It is certain that St. Paul did make considerable converts at his coming to Rome ; which is the reason of his mentioning the saints in Cæsar's household. And it is not improbable that some of the British captives, carried over with Caractacus and his family, might be among them ; who

would certainly promote the conversion of their country by St. Paul."

It is somewhat remarkable, (as is well observed by the learned author of the *Horæ Britannicæ*,) that what appears to be so reasonable, and what the profound sagacity of the bishop ventured to suggest as probable, is placed before us by the most ancient British traditions as matter of fact. The Triads, to which reference has been frequently made in the preceding pages, refer to this in the following terms:—

"Triad XVIII. There were three holy families in the Isle of Britain. First, the family of Bran the blessed, the son of Llyr Llediaith; for Bran was the first who brought the faith of Christ to this island from Rome, where he was in prison through the treachery of Boadicea."

Further reference is made to this subject in Triad XXXV., which names the three blessed princes of the Isle of Britain:—

"First, Bran the blessed, son of Llyr Llediaith, who first brought the faith of Christ to the Cambrians from Rome, where he had been seven years as a hostage for his son Caradog" (Caractacus). It may be observed, that, although Tacitus mentions the wife and brothers of the British hero, he makes no allusion to his father. "It would seem, that, although Caractacus was liberated, the jealousy of Claudius, and the policy of an enemy, would not suffer that prince to return to Britain. His family continued with him at Rome, perhaps as prisoners at large, while he lived; and, at the death of that hero, they might be permitted to return home, as we are told his father did.

"In that little work, 'The Genealogy of the Saints,' express mention is made of the names of some persons who accompanied *Brán* into this country, as Christians, to preach the Gospel, and to form a Christian church in Britain; and that, in particular, among the Silurians in Wales: these are *Ilid* and *Cynvan*, who were said to be Israelites. But there is mention of one who is called 'a man of Italy,' and named, in consonance with the genius of the language, *Arwystli*, that is, *Aristobulus*, who, according to some other accounts,

was the first bishop of this island.”* It is at least curious to place in connexion with this British tradition the fact, that, in the Greek *Manæon*,† there is mention made of Aristobulus, whose household is saluted by St. Paul in Romans xvi. 10. This Aristobulus is said to have been ordained bishop by St. Paul, and sent by that apostle into Britain, where he converted many of the inhabitants, and formed them into churches : he at last suffered martyrdom.‡

Although these traditions may not generally be regarded as affording any conclusive evidence, yet, when taken in connexion with other authorities, they are undoubtedly entitled to much respect as excellent collateral testimony. The Triads possess a character of their own, which is singularly at variance with the common attributes of the great mass of ecclesiastical documents fabricated in the Middle Ages. They are not long and laboured treatises, bearing all the marks of artful contrivance in attempting to recommend novel ceremonies, to establish fashionable dogmas, or to elevate wicked and obnoxious personages. The simplicity of their style insensibly attracts the favourable regard of the reader ; and the manner in which they are usually quoted, merely as artless and accidental co-incidences with facts narrated by professed historians, insures for them a large portion of public credence.

The matter stands thus : several independent witnesses unite in their depositions ; their agreement therefore affords material support to the facts to which each of them deposes. First we have the Triads, stating that the father of Caractacus, who was called Bran, accompanied him to Rome about the year of our Lord 52. According to the most approved ecclesiastical critics, St. Paul visited that city about A.D. 56 ; and, it is allowed, the apostle’s ministry seems to have been blessed to the conversion of some members of the family of Caractacus. The next link in the chain of evidence

* *Horæ Britannicæ*, vol. ii., p. 23.

† COLLIER’S “*Ecclesiastical History*,” vol. i., p. 7.

‡ USHER’S *Britannic. Eccles. Antiq.*, cap. i. Whole Works, vol. v. Dublin, 1843.

is, that, after a residence in Rome of seven years, (that is, in the year 59 or 60,) Bran returned to Britain. It is averred that he did not return alone, but was accompanied by three Christian teachers. On this point the character of the evidence is remarkable: The Triads state simply, that Bran first brought the faith of Christ to this island. But "the Genealogy of the Saints" says, that of the three persons who accompanied him, two were Israelites, and the other was a man of Italy, who is called Arwystli. It is curious to place in connexion with this tradition the fact, that Aristobulus is reported to have been the first bishop of Britain; especially as his name, thrown into a British form, would be precisely that which the Welsh traditions give us, namely, Arwystli. On this subject Mr. Taylor observes: "The resemblance between the British name *Arwystli* and the Greek *Aristobulus* deserves more consideration than it has hitherto received. It is certain, that the formation of this name (from the Greek) is according to the analogy of the ancient British language." * All this is corroborated by the ancient Greek record, which assures us that Aristobulus, who had visited this island as a Christian minister, was put to death by the Britons on the 15th of March, on which day his martyrdom was afterwards commemorated.

We do not presume to assert, that this evidence clearly establishes the fact, that Bran and his associates were the first who introduced the Gospel into Britain; but we cannot avoid saying that many accounts, supported by a less amount of evidence, are generally regarded as portions of undoubted history. We may add the testimony of the learned editor of Calmet's Dictionary on this point. Mr. Taylor observes, that "most curious and valuable fragments are preserved in the Welsh language, relating to persons and events from the earliest times to the beginning of the seventh century. These ancient British documents, which are of undoubted credit, though but little known till lately, state that Bran and his companions, returning from Rome, 'were the means of introducing the knowledge of Christ among their countrymen;

* CALMET'S Dictionary, 8vo., edited by Taylor, article *Christianity*.

on which account Bran was long distinguished as *one of the three blessed sovereigns*, and his family as *one of the holy lineages, of Britain.*' "

The case of Pudens, Linus, and Claudia, mentioned by St. Paul, (2 Tim. vi. 21,) brings additional light, and greatly corroborates the testimony of these traditions.

Linus, by some writers, is supposed to have been the son of Caractacus and brother of Claudia. Mr. Taylor thinks "there is little hazard in taking Linus for the British *CyLlin*," * the son of the British chief. There may be weight in this opinion; but as we hear but little of a son of Caractacus in the ancient British records, although his daughter is frequently mentioned, we do not feel justified in coming to any strong conclusion upon it. With Claudia, however, the case is different: There are the most satisfactory reasons for believing, that this distinguished female was the daughter of the captive British hero, who had so long and so successfully resisted the Roman arms. But whether she was the daughter of Caractacus, as Archbishop Usher believed, or not, no doubt can be entertained of her having been a Briton and a Christian. The evidence which communicates an air of strong probability to this supposition, must, at this great distance of time, be exceedingly interesting.

In the passage of Scripture already cited, St. Paul sends to Timothy from Rome the greeting of Pudens, Linus, and Claudia. It is a remarkable fact, in connexion with this greeting, that Martial, the Roman poet, in two beautiful epigrams which have been preserved to our age, celebrates the beauty and virtues of Claudia, "of the woad-stained British race," and her marriage with a noble Roman, of the name of Pudens. Now as Martial wrote about the time of St. Paul's last visit to Rome, there can be little doubt that the Pudens and Claudia of the apostle were the same persons as those whom the poet has described,—the lady of British extraction, and her Roman husband. For every one who is acquainted with the peculiarities of the cognominal nomenclature adopted by the Romans, will find the utmost

* CALMET'S Dictionary, 8vo., edited by Taylor, article *Linus*.

difficulty in believing that two ladies, having in common the name of Claudia, should, at that time, and in the same city, be married to two gentlemen of the name of Pudens.

There is a marked correspondence between the two epigrams, which have never been subjected to enlarged critical investigation, though they deserve a more ample elucidation from Christian literati than they have received. For instance: In *the second* epigram, Claudia receives the patronymic of Rufina; and *the first* is addressed to Rufus, who seems to have been one of her near relations. If this be the "Rufus chosen in the Lord," whom St. Paul salutes in the close of his Epistle to the Romans, as well as "his mother," from whom the apostle professes to have received acts of kindness *truly maternal*, then some of Claudia's kindred were Christians: she being herself of British extraction, then her relation Rufus (probably her uncle or grandfather) must have been a native of this island; and Rufus may then be introduced to the very remarkable trio,—Pudens, Linus, and Claudia, two of whom are now generally allowed to have been Britons. The famous Rutgersius, and other critics, wish the epithet *peregrina*, in the first epigram, to be written and considered as one of her proper names.* But it is far more natural to regard it merely as an ordinary term, and equal in signification to the first line of the second epigram.†

* AD RUFUM, DE NUPTIIS PUDENTIS ET CLAUDIÆ PEREGRINÆ.

Claudia, Rufe, meo nubit peregrina Pudenti:

Macte esto tædis, O Hymenæe, tuis.

Tam bene rara suo miscentur cinnama nardo,

Massica Theseis tam bene vina favis.

Nec melius teneris junguntur vitibus ulmi,

Nec plus lotus aquas, littora myrtus amat.

Candida perpetuo reside, Concordia, lecto,

Tamque pari semper sit Venus æqua jugo.

Diligat illa senem quondam: sed et ipsa marito,

Tunc quoque cum fuerit, non videatur, anus.

Lib. iv., epig. 13.

† DE CLAUDIA RUFINA.

Claudia cæruleis cum sit Rufina Britannis

Edita, cur Latiae pectora plebis habet?

Quale decus formæ! Romauam credere matres

Italides possunt, Atthides esse suam.

In the one she is styled "a foreigner," and in the other is said to have "sprung from the woad-stained British race." This observation possesses some potency in establishing the identity of the lady who was the subject of both these compositions. But one of the most puzzling words to the critics is *sancto*, applied, in the fifth line of the second epigram, to Pudens, which is regarded as a very unusual appropriation of the epithet. In reference to it, one of the best editors of Martial puts this shrewd question: "Is this word applied to him on account of his personal piety? or was he dead? for the ancients always accounted dead persons to be *sainted* or *holy*." But it was correctly bestowed on Pudens as a Christian, in a novel acceptation of it, which, even in that age, became one of the peculiar distinctions of the most devoted and consistent professors of our holy religion.

As the daughter of Caractacus was one of the captives taken by the Romans, and carried with him to Rome, it has been thought by Archbishop Usher, the Rev. P. Roberts, and the learned author of *Horæ Britannicæ*, that this Claudia was the daughter of the British hero. Whether such was her descent or not, it is extremely probable that she was one of the first British Christians.

Concerning the interesting fact of the first introduction of the Gospel to the inhabitants of Britain, we have endeavoured to give the best information which the subject affords. Yet, after having placed it as fully and as explicitly as possible before the reader, it must be acknowledged, that doubts hang over this period of our church history. "The light of the word shone here," says an eminent historian; "*but we know not who kindled it.*" This correct assertion certainly suggests a valuable hint, with respect to a doctrine always held by the church of Rome, and recently advocated by the high party in the church of England, and by some men urged with great violence,—that, in order to the pro-

Dî bene, quot sancto peperit fœcunda marito,
 Quot sperat generos, quotque puella nurus.
 Sic placeat Superis, ut conjuge gaudeat uno,
 Et semper natis gaudeat illa tribus.

Lib. xi., epig 54.

per qualification of Christian ministers, it is necessary that they should derive their appointment from those whose ordination can be traced up to some of the apostles. This is a doctrine which would seem to imply a necessity for a miraculous preservation of the early annals of every church : yet here we have one, which, without controversy, was founded in the apostolic age, which flourished for several centuries, gave martyrs of heroic courage to the ensanguined block, sent bishops of renown to the early councils, and had ministers, whose teaching shed light and peace on this previously benighted land : and yet, after all, we know not whether the Gospel was first preached here by an apostle, by a deacon, or by a layman. So far, indeed, from any divine interposition having taken place to preserve this knowledge, and make this apostolical succession clear and obvious, there is a marvellous absence of authentic and definite information on the subject ; so much so, that Dr. Thomas Fuller says, “ Churches are generally ambitious to entitle themselves to apostles for their founders ; conceiving they should otherwise be esteemed but as of the second form and younger house if they received the faith from any inferior preacher. Wherefore, as the Heathen, in searching after the original of their nations, never leave soaring till they touch the clouds and fetch their pedigree from some god ; so Christians think it nothing worth, except they relate [refer] the first planting of religion in their country to some apostle. Whereas, indeed, it matters not, if the doctrine be the same, whether the apostles preached it by themselves or by their successors. We see, little certainty can be extracted, [as to] who first brought the Gospel hither ; it is so long since, the British church hath forgotten her own infancy, who were her first godfathers : we see the light of the word shined here, but see not who kindled it. I will not say, As God, to prevent idolatry, caused the body of Moses to be concealed ; (Deut. xxxiv. 6 ;) so, to cut off from posterity all occasion of superstition, He suffered the memories of our primitive planters to be buried in obscurity.” * As the

* “ Church History of Britain,” Nichols’s edition, vol. i., p. 11.

learned and lively writer just quoted has not uttered any decision on the divine intention in this matter, we shall pursue the same prudent course. Every one, however, will perceive that this fact concerning the uncertainty of the earliest harbingers of Christianity is calculated to counteract the influence of the superstition which aspires to derive our national religion in a direct line from the personal labours of one of the apostles, or which asserts doctrines that make the knowledge of such direct succession essential to the validity of ministers at the present time.

We have already stated that absolute certainty respecting the introduction of the Gospel into these realms cannot be obtained ; but the evidence which has been adduced leads us to conclude, that in all probability the first knowledge of Christianity was brought to this island either by St. Paul, or, while that apostle was at Rome, by BRAN, the father of Caractacus ; and that this holy faith was afterwards embraced by king Lucius, and propagated under his sanction and influence.* This prince, we are informed, exerted himself to promote the Christian cause, erected suitable places of worship, and thus contributed to the dissemination of the truth. Although it is evident not only that the Gospel of Christ was effectually preached and extensively received here, but also that this early diffusion became so well known throughout the world that Christian writers refer to it as to an admitted fact, as has been already shown by quotations from Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius ; yet we cannot learn the particulars of its establishment and progress during this period. Among the fragments of ancient authors which have come down to us, we search for them in vain. One circumstance, however, seems to be certain,—that, during part of the first and the second century, the Christians of Britain enjoyed a happy exemption from the several doctrinal errors that afflicted other parts of the church. In Asia and Egypt several heretics arose who propounded various dogmas which greatly obstructed the progress of the Gospel ; but the Christians of Britain were

* DR. SOUTHEY'S "Book of the Church," p. 8.

saved from these by their great distance from the scene, and by their insular situation. They continued long to enjoy the light of the Gospel in its primitive purity ; and this contributed not a little both to the internal prosperity and external safety of the infant church of Britain, and preserved it from many calamities which befell other churches that were infected with these heresies.

It is not easy to ascertain when, and to what extent, buildings were first raised and appropriated to the purposes of Christian worship in Britain. Some have supposed that during this period the Gospel ordinances were generally administered in private dwellings ; and it is not improbable that this was the case to a great extent. The apostles frequently adopted a similar course : indeed, it appears to be the only one which can be pursued with respect to the introduction of the Gospel into any Heathen country ; and even after its reception, when the religion of Christ in all its simplicity and power was enjoyed by a small part of the population, there is every reason to conclude that they would meet in a social manner to strengthen each other's hands, by singing the praises of God in company, offering up their united prayers to Him for His blessing, and by exhorting one another to persevere in the way of life. For it must not be imagined, that, in those days, the Gospel depended entirely for its success and extension on the zeal or ability of its regular ministers. Great as these were, and abundantly owned of God, other agencies mightily contributed to disseminate the knowledge of the truth. These arose out of the common occurrences of every-day life,—the casual but godly conversation of private Christians, and their earnest and fervent appeals to their acquaintances. Their happy experience of divine love gave a holy unction to all that they said and did. Breathing a principle of spiritual life, they carried conviction with power to the hearts of their associates ; and thus, like their brethren in the East, when “scattered abroad” by persecution, they “went every where preaching the word.” (Acts viii. 4.) It was thus that Christianity was diffused over a very considerable portion of

the island, long before the great bulk of the population had submitted to its inward life and power. Tertullian, in a passage already cited, says, that "the Gospel had penetrated those parts of Britain which were inaccessible to the Romans."

Still, it is probable, that in the earliest times buildings were erected here for the special purposes of Christian worship. However fabulous the traditions respecting Joseph of Arimathea may be, it cannot admit of doubt that a Christian church was erected at Glastonbury very early in the Christian era. In the British traditions found in the Triads, we are told, that king Lucius built the first Christian church at Llandaff.* It may also be safely asserted, that whatever doubt may be cast on this authority, it is quite free from the palpable and extravagant embellishments of miracles, undue reverence for saints, and subjection to Rome, found so abundantly in the monkish fabrications of the early ages. We are further informed, that at this period several Pagan temples were alienated from their former profane service, and consecrated to that of Christ; amongst which are mentioned the names of the temple of Apollo at Westminster, and that of Diana at London.† This was a practice which, there is good reason to believe, was adopted in many of the chief cities throughout the Roman empire; Rome herself then standing forth among the foremost of Reformers, by converting the superb Pantheon into the Christian church of All Saints.

Several of the persecutions that afflicted the early church did not extend to Britain; yet, as they affected the whole empire by their discouraging influence, the Christian cause even in this island must have felt depressed to some extent. We are informed that Pomponia Græcina, the wife of "Aulus Plautius, who was honoured with an ovation for his victories in Britain, a woman of illustrious birth, was accused of embracing the rites of a foreign superstition. The matter was

* The time when Lucius flourished is doubtful, as different antiquaries have placed it at A.D. 156, 167, and 170.

† FULLER'S "Church History of Britain," vol. i., p. 24.

referred to the jurisdiction of her husband. Plautius, in conformity to ancient usage, called together a number of her relations, and, in their presence, sat in judgment on the conduct of his wife. He pronounced her innocent. She lived to a great age, in one continued train of affliction.”* There can be no doubt, from this account, that Pomponia was in heart a Christian. Considering the extreme latitude allowed by the Roman religion at this time, it is not likely that any person would be charged with “foreign superstition” as a crime, except he had embraced the Gospel.

We do not hear of any cognizance being taken of departure from the national faith, except on this account. These are the precise terms in which Suetonius, Pliny, and other Roman writers, speak of the Christian religion; while the perpetual affliction or sadness of the remainder of Pomponia’s life is in exact accordance with the representations generally given of the serious character of the disciples of Christ. On these grounds it is commonly admitted that this illustrious female had been brought to a knowledge of the truth.†

The Christian religion, which had silently and gradually been extending itself in Britain during the second and third centuries, was then to be submitted to a fiery ordeal. The doubt and uncertainty which rested on the early history of the church was about to give place to authentic records of a fierce and cruel persecution. The accounts of this calamity afford important information respecting the conduct of the Christians, and the privileges which they enjoyed.

This storm broke out in the reign of Diocletian, at Nicomedia, in February, A.D. 303; when an imperial edict was published, ordering that the churches should be pulled down, and the Holy Scriptures burned; that the profession of Christianity should render men incapable of any office or post of honour; that they should be outlawed, and debarred from the privilege of maintaining a legal suit; and that no pretence

* *TACITI Annales*, lib. xiii., cap. 32.

† Lipsius and other commentators on Tacitus, Stillingfleet, and several Christian historians, are of this opinion.

of nobility of birth should excuse them from being put to the torture.*

This persecution was not only calculated to call into exercise all the powers of the government to break down and extirpate Christianity, but it was as extensive in its range as it was violent in its character. Reaching to every part of the Roman empire, its fury fell on the remotely-situated Christians of Britain. The account furnished by the oldest British church-historian is instructive and affecting :—

“ The churches were overthrown, all the copies of the Holy Scriptures which could be found were burned in the streets, and the chosen pastors of God’s church butchered, together with their innocent sheep, in order that not a vestige, if possible, might remain, in some provinces, of Christ’s religion. What disgraceful flights then took place ; what slaughter and death were inflicted by way of punishment in divers shapes ; what dreadful apostasies from religion then occurred ; and, on the contrary, what glorious crowns of martyrdom then were won ; what raving fury was displayed by the persecutors, and patience on the part of the suffering saints ;—ecclesiastical history informs us : for the whole church were crowding in a body, to leave behind them the dark things of this world, and to make the best of their way to the happy mansions of heaven, as if to their proper homes.”†

From this extract we derive information on several important points. It teaches us that at this early period the Christian religion was widely disseminated among the population of Britain, that numerous churches had been erected, and, what is still more remarkable, that copies of the Holy Scriptures had been generally circulated. This latter fact is worthy of great attention. It shows that the infant church in this island was reared up in accordance with the gracious design of God, “ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.” (Eph. ii. 20.) For it is not until the church

* COLLIER’S “ Ecclesiastical History,” vol. i., p. 46.

† GILDAS, sect. ix.

neglects or prohibits the volume of revealed truth, that it ceases to recognise the Lord Jesus Christ as the ONE Mediator between God and man.

Even this terrible scourge fell more lightly on Britain than on the other provinces of the Roman empire. Constantius Chlorus, the father of Constantine the Great, was then the governor of Britain; and, being friendly to the Christian cause, he appears to have done all that lay in his power to mitigate, although he had not the authority to resist altogether, the imperial decree. One instance of this kindly disposition is related by Eusebius: "Assembling the officers of his household, he announced to them the pleasure of the emperor, requiring the dismissal of the Christians from office, and gave those who were of that religion their choice, either to renounce their creed, or resign their situations. Some of them, unwilling to make the required sacrifice, abjured their faith; upon which Constantius discharged them from his service, declaring that those who had renounced their God would never prove true to an earthly master." Notwithstanding this favour, and although we hear of no executions at Eboracum, (York,) where Constantius resided; in other parts of the country the royal mandate was acted upon. The first martyrdom of which we have any record is that of Alban, who was executed at Verulamium; in consequence of which this town has since borne the name of the martyr, being called St. Alban's.

Before the persecution arose, Alban is said to have been a Heathen; but a Christian teacher who had fled to his house for shelter from his persecutors, became the instrument of his conversion. Struck with the devout behaviour of his guest, who passed a great part of the night as well as the day in watching and prayer, Alban began to inquire concerning his religion, until at length he was persuaded to become a decided Christian. He had only enjoyed the company and instruction of this person a few days, when the Roman governor, hearing that a Christian teacher was concealed in Alban's house, sent a party of soldiers to take him. When these came, Alban presented himself to them, instead

of his guest and teacher, attired in the habit or long coat which the latter usually wore, and was led bound before the judge. The magistrate, standing by the altars of the heathen gods, soon discovered, that, instead of the person sought for, he had before him a well-known, young, and noble Roman; and, enraged at his behaviour, commanded him instantly to sacrifice to the gods, and thus to clear himself from the suspicion of his having harboured a Christian, and abetted his escape. This Alban not only refused to do, but boldly avowed himself a convert to the persecuted faith, pronouncing the gods of Rome to be devils. He was immediately adjudged to death, and, after having been beaten with rods, was led forth to the place of execution. We cannot rely on the accounts which have been given of the circumstances connected with this martyrdom. It is said that, the bridge over which it was necessary to pass to the scene of death being quite filled with the multitude congregated to witness the execution, Alban, anxious to hasten the consummation, walked down to the stream, and, upon lifting his eyes to heaven, the waters divided, and he passed over on the bed of the river. It is also reported that the person appointed to act as executioner was so affected by this miracle, and the Christian firmness and patience displayed by the martyr, that he refused to strike the blow, choosing rather to die as a Christian with Alban. Other prodigies are related to have taken place in connexion with this event. But, however these may partake of the superstitious invention of latter and darker days, no fact in the history of those times is better attested than the martyrdom of Alban.

Aaron and Julius, two citizens of Caer-leon, are also said to have suffered at this time, with many others of both sexes in several places, who, when they had endured sundry torments, and their limbs had been torn in an unheard-of manner, yielded up their souls to God, to enjoy in the heavenly city a reward for the sufferings through which they had passed.*

* BEDE, chap. vii.

After this persecution had raged in Britain two years, the emperors Diocletian and Maximian resigned the imperial dignity, and were succeeded by Constantius Chlorus and Galerius, who had been some time before created Cæsars. The new sovereigns divided the empire between them, Galerius taking the East, and Constantius the West. Immediately on assuming the imperial purple, Constantius ordered the persecution of Christians to cease in his dominions. Soon after this, Constantius was taken ill, and died at York. Some writers have supposed, that this persecution was confined to such persons as enjoyed the privilege of being citizens of Rome; and this is supported by the fact, that in the Welsh fragments of saints and martyrs we have no accounts of any Britons who suffered.* The native Britons were still, to a considerable extent, under the government of their own princes, and were left to follow their own private regulations, provided they acknowledged themselves subject to the supreme rule of the Romans.

Constantine, surnamed the Great, succeeded his father at York; and Galerius, although with evident reluctance, recognised his accession by sending him the ensigns of royalty. This emperor not only imitated his father in favouring the Christian cause, but gradually extended his protection, until he finally established it as the religion of the Roman empire.

Before we proceed to state the further progress of Christianity in this country, it may be necessary to offer a few remarks on the general economy and mode of government which was practised in the Christian church at this period. In primitive times the first great work was that of evangelization. The Gospel was to be preached, the truth of Christ was to be made known. Whether this was done by an apostle, a deacon, or a private believer, the means employed were essentially the same, and consisted in communicating a knowledge of the simple doctrines of the Gospel, and requiring a submission to their authority, and an acceptance of the personal salvation which they offered. This teaching,

* *Horæ Britannicæ*, vol. ii., p. 60.

accompanied by the influences of the Holy Spirit, was every where successful. Men were convinced of the danger to which they were exposed through sin. They humbled themselves in penitential sorrow, sought for spiritual deliverance by earnest prayer, and found, by simple faith in Christ, redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of their sins; they were thus renewed in the spirit of their minds, introduced into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and made partakers of the "great salvation."

These converts formed the primitive church; for in those days this term was never applied but to the company of believers who were associated together in Christian worship. The Gospel having thus far answered its great design, it became requisite, not only that the preaching of the truth should be continued, for the purpose of producing similar effects on those who were yet Heathen, and of teaching, strengthening, and training those who had been thus converted; but also that a fatherly watchfulness and care should be exercised over the church, in order that the "babes in Christ" might be nurtured according to their weakness; the "young men" be rightly directed in the exercise of the Christian graces, and in their efforts of zeal to uphold and extend the kingdom of Christ; and that the "fathers" might enjoy the means of Gospel consolation and support in the seasons of infirmity and suffering. Thus a new want was created, and consequently a new class of duties fell upon the ministers of the Gospel. Those who hitherto had simply fulfilled the work of evangelists, now had, in addition, the oversight of the church. The important charge thus devolving on the Christian ministry rendered it necessary that there should be a sufficient number of pastors connected with every church; and therefore we find it one of the principal points which claimed the special attention of the apostles, that ministers should be ordained in every city where a Christian community existed. These were called *πρεσβύτεροι*, "presbyters," or "elders," perhaps with reference to the application of the term to the patriarchs of the ancient Israelites, or to the members of the Jewish sanhedrim; or

on account of the grave and important duties of their office.* They were also termed ἐπίσκοποι, "overseers," or "bishops," from their having the charge or oversight of the flock committed to their care.

That the terms, "presbyter" and "bishop," were indifferently applied to pastors of Christian churches in the New Testament, is abundantly evident. "Thus the same persons that are called 'bishops' are also called 'elders.' Hence, when St. Paul came to Miletus, he sent to Ephesus for the presbyters of the church, and thus addressed them: 'Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you,' (the presbyters,) ἐπισκόπους, 'bishops or overseers.' (Acts xx. 17, 28) 'Here,' says Dr. Campbell, 'there can be no question that the same persons are denominated presbyters and bishops.' Nor is this the only passage in which we find the terms used convertibly. In Titus i. 5, it is said, 'For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders' (presbyters) 'in every city.' And then it follows, in verse 7, 'For a bishop' (ἐπίσκοπος) 'must be blameless.' In like manner the apostle Peter: 'The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder: Feed the flock of God which is among you, *taking the oversight thereof;*' (1 Peter v. 1, 2;) that is, discharging the office of bishops."† This point might be further confirmed, if necessary.‡ But we proceed to observe, that when believers were multiplied, and any church contained a great number of persons, it became necessary to have several presbyters attached to that church, one of whom was charged with the special oversight of the whole, and from this circumstance became distinguished as its "bishop," or "overseer." Hence St. Jerome says, "A presbyter is the same as a bishop; and until, by the instigation of the devil, there arose

* "The word 'presbyter,' or 'elder,' is taken from the Jewish institution, and signifies rather the venerable prudence and wisdom of age than age itself."—MOSHEIM'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 101.

† WATSON'S "Biblical and Theological Dictionary," article *Bishop*.

‡ See LORD KING'S "Constitution of the Primitive Church," pp. 56-78.

divisions in religion, and it was said among the people, ‘I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas,’ churches were governed by a common council of presbyters. But afterwards, when every one regarded those whom he baptized as belonging to himself rather than to Christ, it was every where decreed that one person elected from the presbyters should be placed over the others ; to whom the care of the whole church might belong, and thus the seeds of division might be taken away. Should any one suppose that this opinion, *that a bishop and presbyter is the same, and that one is the denomination of age and the other of office*,—is not sanctioned by the scriptures, but is only a private fancy of my own, let him read again the apostle’s words to the Philippians : ‘Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints which are in Jesus Christ which are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons : Grace be unto you,’ &c. Philippi is a single city of Macedonia ; and, certainly, of those who are now styled *bishops* there could not have been several at one time in the same city. But because at that time they called the same persons *bishops* whom they styled also *presbyters*, therefore the apostle spoke indifferently of bishops as of presbyters.....These things we have brought forward, to show that, with the ancients, *presbyters were the same as bishops*. But, in order that the roots of dissension might be destroyed, *an usage generally took place, that the whole should devolve upon one*. Therefore, as the presbyters know that *it is by the custom of the church that they are subject to him who is placed over them*, so let the bishops know *that they are above the presbyters rather by custom than by the truth of our Lord’s appointment*, and that they ought to rule the church in common.” *

* JEROME’s Commentary on Titus, as quoted in RIDDLE’s “Christian Antiquities,” p. 188. This testimony of Jerome, who wrote in the beginning of the fifth century, and who had travelled over most of the Christian world, and was profoundly versed in every part of sacred literature, is entitled to great respect, and will by most persons be deemed decisive. But it is amply supported. “I believe,” says Bishop Stillingfleet, “upon the strictest inquiry, Medina’s judgment will prove true, that Jerome, Austin, Ambrose, Sedulius, Primasius, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Theophylact, were all of

Since some persons have cavilled against the opinions of Jerome on this subject, as if they were a mere *lapsus linguæ*; and since immense labour and ingenuity have been employed in an attempt to show that the preceding quotation does not exhibit a fair view of this eminent writer's mature judgment; we subjoin an extract from one of his epistles, which is of such a character as entirely to set the question at rest, as far as it depends on the authority of the most learned Father of the fifth century. Having referred to several texts in the Acts and the Epistles, in proof of the assertion, that a presbyter and bishop were at first the same, he proceeds to say, that "afterwards, when one was elected, and set over the others, this was designed as a remedy against schism For, at Alexandria, from the evangelist Mark down to the bishops Heracles and Dionysius, the presbyters always gave the name of *bishop* to one whom they elected from themselves, and placed in a higher degree; in the same way that an army may create its general." * This fact of the appointment and ordination of bishops in the church of Alexandria *by presbyters alone*, for the space of more than two centuries, is attested also by Eutychius, patriarch of Alexandria. The opinion of Jerome and others, respecting the original equality, or rather identity, of *presbyter* and *bishop*, is in perfect accordance with the language of a still earlier writer,—Tertullian; and, as a recent author has well observed, "the two passages together form a text and commentary sufficient to elucidate the whole matter." † "The highest priest, who is *the bishop*," says Tertullian, "has the right of administering baptism. Then the *presbyters and deacons*; yet not without the authority of the bishop, because of *the honour of the church*, which being preserved, peace is preserved. Otherwise, the right belongs *even to laymen*." ‡

Aërius's judgment as to the identity of both the name and order of bishops and presbyters in the primitive church."

* HIERONYMI *Epist.* lxxxv., *ad Evagrium*.

† RIDDLE'S "Christian Antiquities," p. 191.

‡ "Superest de observatione quoque dandi et accipiendi baptismum commonefacere. Dandi quidem habet jus summus sacerdos, qui est EPISCOPUS. Dehinc PRESBYTERI et DIACONI; non tamen sine episcopi auctoritate,

It appears, then, that at first the minister, who was called indifferently “an elder” or “a bishop,” had the spiritual care of the Christian converts. These assembled for Christian communion and public worship in a private house, until their number increased, as means and opportunity afforded, and a building was erected, and specially appropriated to this purpose. Other ministers were then associated with the first, to give instruction to the people ; or, as was perhaps more commonly the case, when a church was thus raised, the evangelist, or missionary, left it to the care of the ministers whom he had appointed, and journeyed farther, to preach Christ where He had not been named. The church and the ministers still augmenting in numbers, it became necessary that one person should be specially charged with the management of its affairs. This was done, sometimes by the direction of the apostle or evangelist, in other cases by the agreement of the presbyters, and, occasionally, he was elected by all the members of the church ; and thus the maintenance of unity and order was provided for.* As religion progressed, and the people became too many to assemble in one building, other places of worship were erected, and these were supplied with presbyters from the parent church. Thus, different bodies of Christians appear to have been united under one head. Yet, these several congregations were considered but as one church, according to that recognised principle of Christian antiquity, “One bishop and one church.”

Afterward, the work of grace being thus successful in the city or populous town, the presbyters or teachers would naturally extend their ministrations into the adjacent country ; by which means, other Christian congregations would be raised, and the authority of the parent church be still more widely extended. When churches were formed by these means in distant localities, the presbyters, under

propter ecclesiæ honorem ; quo salvo, salva pax est : alioquin etiam LAICIS jus est.—TERTULL. *De Baptismo*, cap. xvii.

* RIDDLE’S “Christian Antiquities,” p. 196 ; KING’S “Primitive Church,” p. 23.

whose superintendence each of them was placed, were denominated *χωρεπίσκοποι*, or "country bishops." They possessed more power than ordinary presbyters; and yet were, to a certain extent, subject to the neighbouring bishop. Thus the Gospel extended its influence, and, as circumstances required, such new arrangements were made as were calculated to forward the great work of the world's conversion, and preserve the unity and spirituality of the church.

The regulations adopted with respect to the different offices of Christian ministers, which we have noticed, were primarily derived, there can be little doubt, from the established order of the Jewish synagogue, and were afterwards extended and modified to meet the emergencies of the case. In primitive times, when believers were faithful to God, before ministers of the Gospel aimed at secular power and worldly aggrandisement, before bishops coveted the state of princes, and strove after extravagant emolument and honours, the *overseer* of the church "acted not so much with the authority of a master, as with the zeal and diligence of a faithful servant. He instructed the people, performed the several parts of divine worship, attended the sick, and inspected into the circumstances and supplies of the poor. He charged, indeed, the presbyters with the performance of those duties and services, which the multiplicity of his engagements rendered it impossible for him to fulfil; but had not the power to decide or enact any thing without the consent of the presbyters and people." *

Even the ordination of ministers, which has since been assumed as one of the peculiar prerogatives of the episcopal office, was in primitive times performed by presbyters, or by a bishop in conjunction with presbyters. Indeed, all the examples of ordination which are given in the New Testament very clearly prove this to have been the practice. "St. Paul, in 2 Tim. i. 6, says, 'Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands;' but, in 1 Tim. iv. 14,

* MOSHEIM'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 106.

he says, 'Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.' Which two passages, referring, as they plainly do, to the same event, the setting apart of Timothy for the ministry, show that the presbytery were associated with St. Paul in the office of ordination; and further prove, that the exclusive assumption of this power, as *by divine right*, by bishops, is an aggression upon the rights of presbyters, for which not only can no scriptural authority be pleaded, but which is in direct opposition to it." *

In the days of the apostles, and for some time after, each church was independent of all others, and arranged all its affairs according to the judgment of the presbyters and people; so that the several Christian bodies had but little intercourse or connexion with each other, until after the public recognition of Christianity by Constantine, when councils of the leading clergy of the churches began to be held generally. Some persons have supposed that these general meetings for deliberating on great questions affecting the church, have been customary from the beginning, and that the first instance is given in Acts xv. This is, however, a mistake. The assembly there described consisted only of the apostles, and the elders and members of one particular church. True, that was the most ancient church; and the judgment to which it came was therefore very properly communicated to less-matured Christian bodies; but the latter were not represented in this assembly. It was not then a council, in the usual ecclesiastical sense of the term, but simply a meeting of one church.

In those early times the apostles, their fellow-labourers, and perhaps some of their immediate successors, were supported partly by the work of their own hands, and partly by the grateful contributions of the faithful. For, when a number of persons were converted to the Christian religion in any place, sufficient to constitute a congregation, they formed themselves into a church, or religious society; and every member, according to his ability, contributed to the

* WATSON'S "Theological Institutes," Works, vol. xii., p. 172.

maintenance of those who "ministered in holy things," to the support of the poor, and to all other necessary charges. The subscriptions for these purposes were commonly made in their religious assemblies, on the first day of every week, in accordance with the apostolic direction.

There can be no doubt but that the worship of the British Christians agreed with the general practice of the primitive church. Respecting this, it may not be improper here to give some information. When the early Christians met for the purpose of divine worship, we are informed that the service was conducted in the following order. First, the holy Scriptures were read; then psalms or hymns were sung; afterward the sermon was preached; and the devotion concluded with solemn prayer.

He who read the Scriptures was particularly appointed to this office, generally as preparative to his ordination as a minister. This person was called by the Latins *lector*, a term equivalent in signification to our English word "reader." He stood in an elevated place, or pulpit, so that all the people might see and hear him; and he read alone, and not alternately with the congregation. The length of the portion of holy writ which was read varied to suit the circumstances of the case, and appears to have been appointed by the presiding minister.

When the reading was finished, then followed the singing of psalms. This constituted a considerable portion of the service; and the people were specially taught in this, as in the other parts of holy worship, to look for and to expect the aid of the Holy Spirit of God. As to what was sung, it is evident that the Psalms of David contributed largely to this part of the divine service; but it is also certain that the presiding minister allowed the use of any other poetry of which he approved. This delightful duty was performed by the people, in harmonious unity, organs and other instruments being unknown. Referring to some passages in the Psalms, the Christian Fathers thought that David, when speaking of musical instruments, emblemized or shadowed forth the praises of the voices, lips, and mouths of his people.

After the singing, the sermon was preached. This was usually a commentary on, or explication of, the lesson which had been read. In the time and country of Justin Martyr, as he himself narrates, "when the reader had ended, the bishop made a sermon, by way of instruction and exhortation to the imitation of the excellent things which had been read." Hence Origen calls the sermon "an explanation of the lesson." According to the last-named Father, the sermon usually lasted one hour; and while on some occasions the minister would pass regularly through the lesson, explaining sentence after sentence, at other times he would omit the least important parts, and confine his discourse to the more difficult, interesting, and useful portions of it. The preacher was usually the bishop, that is, the presiding minister of the church; or else, by his desire, a presbyter, or some other fit person, addressed the audience in his stead. Without his permission, it had been schism and violence, in any person whatsoever, to have usurped his chair; but, with his consent, any clergyman or layman might expound the Scriptures in his pulpit. As this circumstance may now be questioned, it may be necessary to refer, in proof of it, to an interesting incident in the history of Origen: When going from Alexandria into Palestine, before he was in holy orders, he preached publicly in the church, by desire of the bishops of that country. Upon this, Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria, being offended, complained of his conduct, and was answered by Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, and Theocrastus, bishop of Cæsarea, in these terms: "Whereas you write in your letter, that it was never before seen or done, that laymen should preach in the presence of bishops, therein you wander from the truth; for, wheresoever any are found that are fit to profit the brethren, the holy bishops, of their own accord, ask them to preach to the people. So Evelpius was desired by Neon bishop of Laranda; and Paulinus, by Celsus of Iconium; and Theodorus, by Atticus of Synnada; our most blessed brethren; and it is credible that this is likewise done in other places, though we know it not."

As soon as the sermon was ended, all the congregation

rose up to present their prayers to God ; standing being in those early days the general posture for prayer, and uniformly so on the Sabbath. With eyes and hands uplifted toward heaven, the congregation approached their God. In Cyprian's time, the African ministers began their prayer by saying, "Lift up your hearts:" to which the people replied, "We lift them up unto the Lord." In this part of the service the Lord's prayer was often, but not always, used. Beyond this, they had no fixed public form of prayer ; every minister was therefore left to his own ability, as he might be assisted by the Holy Spirit ; and the people, as they felt that his prayer represented their wants, joined in it, by saying, "Amen." *

In this manner, there can be no doubt, the religion of Christ was widely and successfully disseminated in Britain. It encountered and subdued the native superstition of the island ; it overcame the more polished and abominable Heathenism which had been imported from Rome. The persecution of Diocletian, during the two years of its continuance here, must have retarded, in some measure, the progress of the truth ; but the favourable countenance of Constantine made ample compensation for this, and opened up bright and cheering prospects to the British church.

This emperor ascended the throne on the death of his father at York, A.D. 306 ; and from this time the Christian faith began to repair the injuries sustained in the time of persecution. "Christ's young disciples," says Gildas, "after so long and wintry a night, began to behold the genial light of heaven. They rebuilt the churches, which had been levelled to the ground : Christ's sons rejoice, as it were, in the fostering bosom of a mother." In the year of our Lord 312, the great battle took place between Constantine and Maxentius, at a small distance from Rome, which, by the total defeat of the latter, gave the conqueror and his colleague Licinius the undisputed empire of the world.† Immediately

* LORD KING'S "Constitution of the Primitive Church," part ii., pp. 4-16.

† It was just before this engagement that Constantine is reported to

after this victory, these two sovereigns granted to the Christians a full power of living according to their own laws and institutions ; which power was specified still more clearly in another edict, drawn up at Milan in the following year.

As the influence of general councils changed the entire constitution of the Christian church, their origin must ever be a subject of interest. The primitive form of church-government, of which we have given an outline, continued during the first, and for the greater part of the second, century. "One inspector, or bishop, presided over each Christian assembly, to which office he was elected by the voices of the whole people. In this post he was to be watchful and provident, attentive to the wants of the church, and careful to supply them. To assist him in this laborious province, he formed a council of presbyters, which was not confined to any fixed number ; and to each of these he distributed his task, and appointed a station, in which he was to promote the interests of the church. To the bishops and presbyters, the ministers or deacons were subject ; and the latter were divided into a variety of classes, as the different exigencies of the church required."*

"During a great part of the second century, the Christian churches were independent of each other ; nor were they joined together by association, confederacy, or any bonds but those of charity. Each Christian assembly was a little state, governed by its own laws, which were either enacted or, at least, approved by the society. But, in process of time, all the Christian churches of a province were formed into one large ecclesiastical body, which, like confederate states, assembled at certain times, in order to deliberate about the common interests of the whole. This institution had its origin among

have seen a luminous cross in the heavens at mid-day, with an inscription in Latin or Greek, to this effect: "In this conquer." The Saviour is also stated to have appeared to him at night, explaining the omen. The account proceeds to inform us, that he obeyed the divine mandate, adopting the cross as his standard, and causing it to be depicted on the shields of his soldiers ; and that, in consequence of these miracles and the success that followed, he cordially embraced Christianity.

* DR. HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. i., p. 144.

the Greeks, with whom nothing was more common than this confederacy of independent states, and the regular assemblies which met, in consequence thereof, at fixed times, and were composed of the deputies of each respective state. But these ecclesiastical associations were not long confined to the Greeks; their great utility was no sooner perceived, than they became universal, and were formed in all places where the Gospel was planted. To these assemblies, in which the deputies or commissioners of several churches consulted together, the name of 'synods' was appropriated by the Greeks, and that of 'councils' by the Latins; and the laws that were enacted in these general meetings were called 'canons,' that is, rules.

"These councils, of which we find not the smallest trace before the middle of the second century, changed the whole face of the church, and gave it a new form; for by them the ancient privileges of the people were considerably diminished, and the power and authority of the bishops greatly augmented. The humility, indeed, and prudence of these pious prelates prevented their assuming all at once the power with which they were afterward invested. At their first appearance in these general councils, they acknowledged that they were no more than the delegates of their respective churches, and that they acted in the name and by the appointment of the people. But they soon changed this humble tone, imperceptibly extended the limits of their authority, turned their influence into dominion, and their councils into laws; and openly asserted at length, that Christ had empowered them to prescribe to His people authoritative rules of faith and manners. Another effect of these councils was, the gradual abolition of that perfect equality which reigned among all bishops in the primitive times. For the order and decency of these assemblies required that some one of the provincial bishops, met in council, should be invested with a superior degree of power and authority; and hence the rights of metropolitans derive their origin. In the mean time the bounds of the church were enlarged; the custom of holding councils was followed

wherever the sound of the Gospel had reached; and the universal church had now the appearance of one vast republic, formed by the combination of a great number of little states. This occasioned the creation of a new order of ecclesiastics, who were appointed, in different parts of the world, as heads of the church, and whose office it was to preserve the consistence and union of that immense body, whose members were so widely dispersed throughout the nations. Such was the nature and office of the patriarchs; among whom, at length, ambition, being arrived at its most insolent period, formed a new dignity, investing the bishop of Rome and his successors with the title and authority of 'prince of the patriarchs.' " *

Thus the simple and primitive constitution of the church was totally changed; and members of different sections of it in the present day will vary in judgment respecting those alterations and arrangements, as to the degree in which any or all of them were beneficial to the Christian cause, or in accordance with the genius of the Gospel. It may, however, be remarked, that whereas the appointment of diocesan bishops, metropolitans, primates, patriarchs, and finally of the pope, arose out of mere conventional arrangements, as dictated and called for by the real or imaginary necessities of the church, they ought all to be defended, by those who approve of them, on this ground only. When, therefore, we find high churchmen and Papists maintaining these orders as existing by divine right, in the entire absence of any authority for such a claim in the New Testament, a tacit admission appears to be included,—that they cannot be supported on the more tenable ground of utility to the Christian cause, in the present condition of religious and political society. It is evident that the wide extent of the Roman empire tended to foster and promote much of this arrangement in the church; and almost the whole may be traced to an intentional or accidental copying of the political divisions and magistrates of the empire. As in the progress of this career the spirit and genius of the Gospel were lost sight of, the whole ended

* MOSHEIM'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., pp. 177–179.

in the erection of an universal and absolute spiritual monarchy, in the person of the pope ; which, whatever may be said of intermediate points, stands out as an awful and profane contrast to all that is scriptural and divine in the economy of the primitive church.*

These alterations in the constitution and government of the church were, however, introduced gradually ; and there is reason to believe that their progress in Britain was slower than in the central parts of the empire. Yet, as the pastors of this country, immediately after the public recognition of Christianity by Constantine, took part in the general councils when they occurred, there can be no doubt that, as long as this island remained subject to the Roman government, the British Christians conformed to the usages adopted elsewhere.

One of the first councils called together under the auspices of the emperor Constantine, met at Arles, a city of France, not far from Marseilles, and the capital of the province of Vienne. This council was summoned to give judgment in the case of the Donatists.† It consisted of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, from the western parts of the empire, and was held A.D. 314. Amongst the names subscribed to the acts of this council, we find those of three British bishops, namely, Eborius, bishop of York ; Restitutus, bishop of London ; and Adelphus, bishop *de civitate coloniae Londinensium*. It is very uncertain what place is meant by this latter designation. Usher supposes Colchester to be intended ; Selden and Spelman, the old colony of Maldon ; and bishop Stillingfleet, with greater show of reason, believes it to be *Isca Silurium*, or Caerleon, as being the head of the third Roman province in the island. Besides pronouncing judgment in the cause of the Donatists, this council enacted sundry canons respecting bishops, presbyters, and deacons ; with others referring to the people, and one in

* See CAVE's "Primitive Christianity ;" WATSON's "Theological Institutes ;" and MOSHEIM's "Ecclesiastical History."

† This controversy arose out of the protest of the Numidian bishops against the alleged improper appointment of Cæcilianus to be bishop of Carthage.

particular fixing the time on which the festival of Easter was to be kept. The presence of three bishops, with some of the inferior clergy, of Britain, on this occasion, must be admitted as a proof of the wide extent of Christian influence in the island at this period, and also of the prosperous and established character of the churches. It is likewise evident, that at this time there were no archbishops or metropolitans among the British clergy. But the most important branch of information furnished by the records of this council respects the manner in which it treated the bishop of Rome. As this sovereign pontiff, who claims to be the successor of Peter, challenges, for himself and all his predecessors, an entire and paramount supremacy over the whole church, with authority to confirm or annul all acts of councils, from the time of the apostles to the present ; it becomes a subject of interest to ascertain how one of the first councils of which we have any knowledge, and the very first at which, as far as we are informed, any British prelate attended, acted with respect to such claims.

The Christian Fathers who assembled at Arles exhibited no signs of submission, no acknowledgment of supreme pastorship, in their address to the bishop of Rome. They sent him, indeed, a copy of the canons which they had enacted ; and, admitting that he "had a larger diocess," expressed a wish that "he had been present to have judged together with them ;" they would have been glad, they wrote, of "the company of their brother of Rome," as they familiarly called him. They did not, however, ask his confirmation of what they had done, but stated, "that, assembled at the command of the emperor, they had the warrant of a divine authority, and a certain rule and standard of faith, to justify and direct their proceedings." They, therefore, transmitted to him their canons, with the plain declaration, "that they had been already settled by common consent, and were sent to him to make them more public."

The British bishops appear to have been but sparingly supplied at this period, and it seems that the church generally was in indigent circumstances. But as the

emperor Constantine became more open in his profession of the Christian faith, he became more liberal of his favours to the Christian clergy. By one edict, he exempted them from military and other burdensome services. This measure saved the ministers of the Gospel from much oppression, and afforded them additional opportunities of extending their usefulness. By another law, Constantine bestowed upon the church all the goods of the late martyrs who had died without heirs. But the famous edict which was published by the same prince at Rome, July 3rd, A.D. 322, was of far greater advantage to the clergy than all the rest. This law gave full liberty to persons of all ranks to leave by will as great a part of their estates as they pleased to the church. At Rome, and in other opulent cities, this decree greatly enriched the clergy in a short time, by the liberal donations of many opulent persons. But as the professors of this island were not in general so wealthy as those in some other countries, riches did not flow into the British churches with so rapid a tide.* Hence when the emperor Constantius offered to maintain the bishops assembled at the council of Ariminum at the public charge, it was refused by all, excepting three of those who came from Britain, who, being too poor to support themselves, preferred accepting the sovereign's bounty to becoming burdensome to their brethren.

The pious mind that rejoices to see the fires of persecution extinguished, and the sovereign of the world coming forward as "nursing father" to the infant church, will feel greatly disappointed and pained to learn, that no sooner was Christianity delivered from external violence than it was afflicted with internal discord. The flames of persecution were soon succeeded by the equally destructive influence of religious controversy. The most fatal of these disputes occurred A.D. 317, between Arius, a presbyter in the church of Alexandria, and Alexander, bishop of that city. It was concerning the supreme Divinity of Christ.

In an assembly of the presbyters, it appears that this bishop, speaking of the doctrine of the Trinity, expressed

* DR. HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. i., p. 146.

himself with a high degree of freedom and confidence; and, among other things, asserted that the Son was not only of the same eminence and dignity, but of the same essence, with the Father. This assertion was opposed by Arius, a man of a subtle turn of mind, and remarkable for eloquence. In the course of his opposition, he ran into the contrary extreme, and maintained that the Son was totally and essentially distinct from the Father; that He was the first and noblest of those beings, whom God the Father had created out of nothing, the instrument by whose subordinate operation the Almighty Father formed the universe, and therefore inferior to the Father both in nature and dignity.* These unsound and unscriptural views respecting the blessed Saviour were associated with other doctrines very different from those commonly received among Christians. Arius had no sooner publicly promulgated these opinions than they were received by great numbers of persons in Egypt and the neighbouring provinces; among whom we find many who were distinguished as much by their learning and genius, as by their rank and station. Alexander, deeming this case one which called for prompt and decisive action, assembled two councils at Alexandria, in which he accused Arius of impiety, and caused him to be expelled from communion with the church. Arius received this treatment with great equanimity, retired into Palestine, and wrote thence to the most eminent men in different countries, exhibiting and defending his opinions. Thus they became known to nearly the whole of the Christian world, and almost every where found some persons to believe them.

The emperor Constantine (who now began to act as if his imperial dignity gave him the right, as well as the power, to interfere in the internal economy of the church) at first treated this controversy as an unimportant matter, and simply addressed a letter to each of the contending parties, admonishing them to end their disputes. On finding this to be ineffectual, and that the evil was extending, he assembled a council at Nice in Bithynia in the year 325. It was in-

* MOSHEIM'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 412.

tended that this council should represent the universal church in as complete a manner as possible. Constantine therefore sent out an universal summons for the bishops to come from all quarters of his empire ; and this edict was published throughout all the provinces and distant realms which had embraced Christianity. Consequently an immense number of bishops attended ; and amongst them, there can be no doubt, were some from Britain, although this cannot now be fully ascertained, as the list of subscriptions which has been preserved is very imperfect.

The decision of this council was most important, and calculated to exercise a great and salutary influence in the church through all ages. It fully recognised the apostolic doctrine of the proper Divinity of the Son of God, and condemned the heresy of Arius ; and that this judgment might be made perpetually operative, a creed was drawn up by its authority,* and published under its sanction, which exhibits, as fully as language can, a clear and correct view of this essential doctrine.

As the Arian controversy belongs rather to the history of the universal church, than to that of the religion of England, we cannot here enter into the subject ; yet it may be necessary to observe, that it first caused the division of the ministers of the Gospel into two great rival factions. That both parties indulged in very intemperate language, can scarcely be doubted : this might have been expected, from the vital interest of the question at issue, and the frailty of human nature. But we feel as much astonished as grieved, when we find bishops of the Christian church descending from controversy to abuse, and proceeding to inflict the penalties of confiscation, banishment, and death on their opponents.

The Arians were unconvinced and undismayed by the decision of the council of Nice. Although they did not dare to

* The first part of the Nicene Creed, as far as the words, " Holy Ghost." The remaining part was added by the council of Constantinople, A.D. 581 ; except the words, " and the Son," which follow the words, " Who proceedeth from the Father," which were added by the Spanish bishops ; and, after considerable demur, were allowed by the bishop of Rome, A.D. 883.

propagate their pernicious opinions openly as before, they laboured to extend their views more insidiously, and with equal success. Disguising their real sentiments, mixing with the orthodox in their councils, they gradually obtained public confidence, and then exerted all their powers to defame those bishops who had most ably supported the doctrine of Scripture. In this course they were too successful. On the most absurd and groundless charges, Athanasius was banished; and Paulus, bishop of Constantinople, and others, were expelled from their sacred offices. Encouraged by these results, the Arian numbers increased; and at the council of Antioch they were a majority, and adopted measures calculated to condemn the decisions of Nice, and to promote the Arian cause.

The church being thus divided, and reduced to a state of anarchy, Julius, bishop of Rome, applied to the emperor Constans to summon a general council; which the latter, with the concurrence of his brother Constantius, appointed to be held at Sardica, a city of Thrace, A.D. 347. At this council, which was very numerously attended, (there being two hundred and eighty bishops from the western empire, and seventy-six from the east,) Athanasius, Paulus, and the rest of the injured bishops, appeared to defend themselves. But the eastern part of the council, being mostly Arians, and finding that the debates were to be free, and that they could not procure a guard from the court to overawe the votes, retired from the council, declaring that they would not join with the western bishops, unless Athanasius and the other bishops, whom they had condemned, were forbidden the council. This request was refused; while any who had charges to prefer against those persons, were summoned to appear and prefer them. This the Arians declined, and withdrew in a body to Philippopolis, where they continued their deliberations.*

Several important circumstances stand connected with this Sardican council. It vindicated the decisions of the council of Nice, and condemned Arianism. It laid

* COLLIER'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 72.

claim to the fullest spiritual independence, and treated the bishop of Rome simply as a friend and a brother; a fact which fully proves that the supremacy of the pope was at that time unknown. As it is well attested that British bishops attended on this occasion, it is sufficiently evident that these decisions were in accordance with the religious views which were at this time held among British Christians.

The next information we have of the British church supports this opinion. Hilary, in a book, published in the year 358, during his banishment into Phrygia, "salutes the bishops of Britain among the rest of the prelates of Christendom; and complains a little, that the distance of place, and the disadvantages of his banishment, had barred him the satisfaction of receiving frequent letters from them. After this complaint, he congratulates them on their orthodoxy, and that they had preserved themselves all along from heretical infection." * Thus far, then, it appears that the Christians of Britain kept the pure faith of the Gospel.

In the following year, 359, another council was held. It was convened by Constantius, and met at Ariminum, in Italy. On this occasion above four hundred bishops, from the different parts of the western empire, met together; and were provided for at the emperor's charge, with the exception of the bishops of Gaul and Britain, nearly all of whom declined being supported by the royal bounty. Three of the British bishops, however, as we have before stated, being very poor, thought it more advisable to be maintained by the emperor than to be burdensome to their brethren. From this account there is good reason to believe that a considerable number of bishops from Britain attended this council. Here, also, we find a memorable instance of the tyrannical influence of the civil power in the internal affairs of the church; for although, at the beginning of the council, the members unanimously declared their approbation of the Nicene Creed, they were afterward induced, by the influence of Constantius, to subscribe a creed which differed from the Nicene. It is true that, verbally, this

* COLLIER'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 85.

difference was but little ; yet it was lamented by the orthodox, as virtually giving up the great doctrine involved in the controversy. No stronger proof can be required that this measure was forced upon the council than the fact, that as soon as the several bishops returned to their respective dioceses, they renewed their former declarations in favour of the faith of Nice, and renounced their involuntary subscription at Ariminum.* Four years afterward we find Athanasius, and the bishops assembled with him in the council of Antioch, assuring the emperor Jovian, that the bishops of Spain, Gaul, and Britain continued to adhere to the faith of the council of Nice.

Nevertheless it is beyond doubt, that the Arian heresy was introduced into this country, although it is difficult to ascertain precisely to what extent its pernicious influence was exercised. Gildas states explicitly, that the British church was favoured with great prosperity from the time of the Diocletian persecution, "until the Arian treason, fatal as a serpent, and vomiting its poison from beyond the sea, caused deadly dissension between brothers inhabiting the same house."† The same sentiment is expressed by Bede in nearly similar language. Referring to the same period, he says, "This peace continued until the time of the Arian madness, which, having corrupted the whole world, infected this island also, so far removed from the rest of the globe with the poison of its errors."‡ It is not easy to conceive what could have induced Gildas to make this statement, if it had not been true ; and although Dr. Henry has done his utmost to vindicate the Britons from this charge, he has only made it appear very probable that, however Arianism might have been introduced and spread amongst the Christians of Britain, the churches in general, and the great body of the clergy, adhered to the doctrines of the Gospel.

It is evident that the church was at this time exposed to great danger from a variety of causes. Christianity was

* HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. i., p. 148.

† GILDAS, cap. 12.

‡ BEDÉ'S "Ecclesiastical History," chap. viii.

patronized by the state ; the clergy were brought into connexion with the princes of the empire ; various heresies had been introduced, and some of these had been embraced by persons high in civil and political authority. All this tended to exercise an unfavourable influence on the church. We find some of the clergy claiming extravagant powers, and others falling away from the simple truth of the Gospel, and embracing divers errors. Among the evils which resulted from this state of things, perhaps none is more remarkable, or more to be deplored, than the extent to which the simplicity of religion was debased by being loaded with pompous ceremonies, under the pretext of gaining over the Heathen to embrace the cross of Christ. Men who were strangers to the inward power of religion found a substitute in outward forms. A great diversity of rites were introduced into divine worship, and almost every province had something peculiar to itself, which, in process of time, became the fertile source of violent contentions. The poverty of the British Christians was perhaps the means of preserving them in some measure from running into the excesses of other churches. But if our countrymen had not departed from primitive simplicity so far as the inhabitants of Italy and of some other countries, yet they had their share of superstition. Among the numbers who travelled to Jerusalem to visit our Saviour's grave, over which the mother of Constantine had built a sumptuous church, were several Britons : some of them are also enumerated among those pilgrims who travelled into Syria to visit that celebrated fanatic, Simon Stylites, who received that name on account of his living on the top of a high pillar. He is said to have spent thirty-seven years in that manner. "Many people," says Theodoret, "came to see him from the remotest corners of the west, particularly from Spain, Gaul, and Britain."*

About the beginning of the fifth century the church was assailed by a new heresy, the author of which was a native of Britain, named Morgan in his own tongue, but called by

* HUGHES'S *Horæ Britannicæ*, vol. ii., p. 77.

the Latins Pelagius.* The principal doctrines which he taught were the following :—That Adam's sin affected only himself, not his posterity ; that children at their birth are as pure and innocent as Adam was at his creation ; and that the grace of God is not necessary to enable men to do their duty, to overcome temptation, or even to attain perfection : but they may do all this by the freedom of their own wills, and the exertion of their natural powers. These opinions, so flattering to the vanity of human nature, appear to have been received with avidity by great numbers of both clergy and laity ; and the pernicious consequences may be easily imagined which resulted from their reception, obviously implying, as it did, the denial of the great truths of the Gospel. They tended to foster the pride of human nature, to call off the attention of the church from that dependence upon divine grace which constitutes the real strength of the Christian, and thus to strike at the root of all genuine piety. And as every effort to give undue exaltation to human nature is sure to derogate from the character and sacrifice of the Saviour, so we are told that “some of the Pelagians taught that Christ was a mere man, and that men might lead sinless lives because Christ did so.”† It must be acknowledged that, in giving this summary of Pelagian doctrines, we depend entirely on the information furnished by those who strenuously opposed them : they may, therefore, in some particulars, be exhibited in deeper colours than those in which their author clothed them. There can, however, be but little doubt that Pelagius did entertain and teach great errors of this kind.

The author of this heresy was a British monk, of some rank, and very exalted reputation. He was born November 13th, 354, on the same day as his great antagonist, St. Augustine, and was educated at the celebrated monastery of Bangor, near Chester. His fame had reached St. Jerome and Augustine, and they had formed a high estimate of his

* *Morgan* in Welsh means “near the sea.” *Pelagius*, a Greek word, adopted by the Romans, has the same signification.

† WATSON'S “Biblical and Theological Dictionary,” article *Pelagians*.

talents before they discovered his departure from Gospel truth. It is, indeed, asserted that Pelagius had left Britain, and had been some time in Italy, before his orthodoxy was questioned. At Rome he met with Celestius, an Hibernian Scot, who, being a person of ability, and fully entering into his peculiar views, soon became his principal coadjutor.

After disseminating these doctrines at Rome, on the approach of the Goths to that city, A.D. 410, the two friends passed over into Africa, where they made numerous converts to their opinions. Here Pelagius left Celestius, and proceeded into Palestine, where he met with Christians from various countries, and, among the rest, some from Britain ; which circumstance afforded him an opportunity of giving extensive currency to his opinions. It does not appear that Pelagius ever returned to Britain, and it is therefore very doubtful whether he ever personally promulgated his peculiar views in this island. They were, however, diligently taught, and most extensively received ; for, while Pelagius was in the East, Agricola, a bishop who had received his dogmas, came over into Britain, and preached them with great success. It has been thought, and with some show of reason, that the Pelagian errors were received with greater avidity in Gaul and Britain on account of their accordance with some of the doctrines taught by the Druids. However this may be, there can be no doubt that these pernicious tenets did great injury to the British church. We are not informed that many of the clergy were led away by these errors ; but it is evident that they were unable to offer any effectual resistance to the arguments by which they were advocated.

Pelagianism having been condemned in several councils, and its influence still extending among the churches of this island, it was determined to solicit assistance from the continent. Venerable Bede informs us, that the Britons, being unable to confute the subtilty of the Pelagian teachers by force of argument, resolved to crave the aid of the Gallican bishops. In consequence of this application, a synod was held in Gaul, and inquiry was made, who were the most

proper persons to undertake a mission into Britain ; when, by unanimous consent, Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, and Lupus, bishop of Troyes, were requested to go over to establish the Britons in the true faith. These holy men, having been appointed by the church, and set apart for this service by their prayers, crossed the seas, and arrived in Britain, A.D. 429. On their arrival, they omitted no opportunity of instructing and recovering the Britons, preaching not only in the churches, but sometimes in the fields and highways ; and thus the orthodox were confirmed, and those who had been misled acknowledged their error.

As for these two eminent prelates, their sanctity and learning gave them the lustre and authority of apostles. The promoters of the heresy kept out of the way at first ; and, like evil and envious spirits, lamented the loss of their proselytes. But at last they recollected themselves, and resolved to make a stand, and give Germanus and Lupus a meeting. They came to the conference richly habited, and, being attended by a great train of their party, made a pompous appearance ; choosing rather to enter the lists, and run the risk of a public discussion, than lose the authority which they had gained over the minds of the people, who would conclude them either cowardly, or conscious of the badness of their cause, had they declined the contest. “ The fame of this conference drew abundance of people together, who came both to hear and pass sentence. The contending parties were very different in their temper, figure, and furniture : one side relied upon divine aid, the other presumed on their own abilities ; piety appeared in one, pride in the other, party ; Christ was for the first, and Pelagius for the other. The holy bishops Germanus and Lupus gave their adversaries leave to argue first ; who spent the time, and amused the audience, with abundance of words, without any thing that was really solid or convincing at the bottom. When they had done, the holy prelates entered upon the confutation with a wonderful force of rhetoric, reason, and scripture proof. They argued from every topic of the question, and made reading and human learning subservient to

revelation. In short, the pride of the Pelagians was mortified, and their sophistry exposed; and, being driven to silence by every objection, they owned their being baffled by not answering. As for the people, they gave sentence in their acclamations, shouted for Germanus and Lupus, and could scarce command their temper so far as to forbear beating the Pelagians." *

This conference was held at Verulam, (St. Alban's,) then one of the most important cities of Britain. After the victory which was there achieved, Germanus and Lupus are reported to have remained some time in the island, and, by their powerful preaching, godly counsel, and holy living, to have rendered very valuable aid to the British church. Much more than this is related of them by Bede and other early writers, who ascribe many miracles to these pious men while engaged in the prosecution of their labours. Since, however, at this distance of time, it is almost impossible to discriminate between historical fact and superstitious embellishment, we have not recorded these wonders. It is not, indeed, unlikely that at such a time God might very signally bless the labours of his servants, and that their career should exhibit some very manifest interpositions of Divine Providence. Nor need we be surprised, if the writers of the following century should, by giving undue colouring to these circumstances, cause them to look like real miracles.

We refer to one particular, both on account of its intrinsic interest and importance, and because it has occasioned some controversy among eminent writers. We are told, that, during the time when those pious French ministers were journeying through the island, visiting and strengthening the churches, "the Saxons and Picts, with their united forces, made war upon the Britons, who, being thus by fear and necessity compelled to take up arms, and thinking themselves unequal to their enemies, implored the assistance of the holy bishops. The latter, hastening to them as they had promised, inspired so much courage into these fearful

* BEDE, as quoted by COLLIER, in his "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 102.

people, that one would have thought they had been joined by a mighty army. Thus, by these apostolic men, Christ Himself commanded in their camp. The holy days of Lent were also at hand, and were rendered more religious by the presence of the priests; insomuch that the people, being instructed by daily sermons, resorted in crowds to be baptized; for most of the army desired admission to the saving water. A church was prepared with boughs for the feast of the resurrection of our Lord, and so fitted up in that martial camp as if it were in a city. The army advanced, still wet with the baptismal water; the faith of the people was strengthened; and, whereas human power had before been despaired of, the divine assistance was now relied upon.

“The enemy received advice of the state of the army, and, not questioning their success against an unarmed multitude, hastened forwards; but, their approach was, by the scouts, made known to the Britons; the greater part of whose forces being just come from the font, after the celebration of Easter, and preparing to arm and carry on the war, Germanus declared he would be their leader. He picked out the most active, viewed the country round about, and observed, in the way by which the enemy was expected, a valley encompassed with hills. In that place he drew up his inexperienced troops, himself acting as their general. A multitude of fierce enemies appeared, whom as soon as those that lay in ambush saw approaching, Germanus, bearing in his hands the standard, instructed his men all in a loud voice to repeat his words. The enemy advancing securely, as thinking to take them by surprise, the priests three times cried, ‘Hallelujah!’ a universal shout of the same word followed, and the hills resounding the echo on all sides, the enemy was struck with dread, fearing, that not only the neighbouring rocks, but even the very skies, were falling upon them; and such was their terror, that their feet were not swift enough to deliver them from it. They fled in disorder, casting away their arms, and well satisfied if, with their naked bodies, they could escape the danger: many of them, in their precipitate and hasty flight, were swallowed

up by the river which they were passing. The Britons, without the loss of a man, beheld their vengeance complete, and became inactive spectators of their victory. The scattered spoils were gathered up, and the pious soldiers rejoiced in the success which Heaven had granted them. The prelates thus triumphed over the enemy without bloodshed, and gained a victory by faith, without the aid of human force; and, having settled the affairs of the island, and restored tranquillity by the defeat as well of the invisible as of the carnal enemies, prepared to return home.”*

The scene of these transactions lay near Mold, a town about ten miles from Chester, where is a spot that still bears the name of *Maes Garmon*, in reference, it is said, to this remarkable event. It bore that name in the age of archbishop Usher, as he informs us; and the learned prelate was much struck with the coincidence. A gentleman who owned that place and estate in the last century, set up an elegant obelisk in view of the town, to commemorate what is called “the Hallelujah Victory.”†

After this event, Germanus and Lupus returned to France, and the British churches proceeded for some little time in regularity and good order. But Pelagianism, though defeated, was not destroyed. Freed from the presence of their mightiest opponents, the adherents of this bad cause began again to propound their obnoxious and dangerous tenets; and so far succeeded, that Germanus was earnestly desired to make another visit to Britain. The pious bishop complied with the invitation, accompanied this time by Severus, bishop of Treves. Upon their arrival, they found a great number of the Britons assembled to receive them.

* *BEDÆ Hist. Eccles.*, lib. i., cap. 20.

† *Horæ Britannicæ*, vol. ii., p. 157. Mr. Whitaker exerted his great talents to disprove altogether the account of the Hallelujah victory, but, we think, without success. There do, indeed, appear to be some chronological and other errors in the statement of Constantius and Bede. We cannot, for instance, find any reason for believing that the Saxons invaded Britain so early, or that they made war in conjunction with the Picts. Yet, considering the testimony on which the account rests, it seems, in substance, to be satisfactorily accredited. Besides, it is very probable, that, instead of “Saxons and Picts,” we ought to read “Scots and Picts.”

Again was the orthodox faith successfully maintained : and the people, being convinced of the dangerous influence of the Pelagian teachers, procured an order for their banishment from the island. From this time the church was kept in peace, Germanus and his companion repeating their laborious efforts to edify and strengthen it.

If the accounts of the labours of this pious prelate, which have come down to us, may be relied upon, he was serviceable to the British churches in other ways beside his confutation of Pelagianism. It is said that he greatly exerted himself in founding schools, promoting learning, and building churches. For these objects he journeyed to the most distant parts of the island. His visit to Wales is distinctly related, and his causing a cathedral to be erected at Landaff ; while ancient and concurring traditions state, that he visited Cornwall,* where a cathedral was built, and a bishopric established, bearing his name ; and that he finally embarked for the continent from Plymouth Sound.† These events bring us down to the middle of the fifth century, and consequently to the time when Rome, harassed by powerful enemies in the centre of her vast empire, withdrew her legions from Britain, and gave up her authority over it. Yet, before this chapter is concluded, it will be proper to notice some circumstances connected with the eminent men who flourished in Britain during this period, and whose history is calculated to shed light on that of the religion of their country.

Keby was the son of Solomon, king of Cornwall, and born about A.D. 325. The name of his father is sufficient evidence that Christianity was known even at this early period in that remote part of the island. This prince, having resolved to devote himself entirely to the study and teaching of Christianity, travelled into France, and spent many years

* WHITAKER, in his "Cathedral of Cornwall," vol. ii., p. 117, says, "Germanus certainly resided some time in the present parish, (St. Germain's,) as the inhabitants only eighty years ago retained several stories concerning him. The church was plainly erected a short time after his visit."

† WHITAKER'S "Cathedral of Cornwall," vol. i., p. 270, *et passim*.

at Poitiers, where was a school then famous for the number and learning of its professors. Over these the celebrated bishop Hilary presided, who, it is said, not only ordained Keby a minister, but appointed him a bishop. Having remained at Poitiers till the death of Hilary, Keby at length returned to Cornwall. He came not, however, to lay any claim to the government, which he had relinquished to other branches of his family; but to devote his life to the service of religion. This is supposed to have taken place about A.D. 369. There is reason for believing that he established himself at Tregoney, then an important town. Here he lived for a short space, and became remarkable for his great sanctity of spirit, insomuch that, not only at Tregoney, but also at Kea near Truro, the church took its name from him, and a feast was instituted to his honour.*

This pious and devoted prince, however, soon left Cornwall; an event which is supposed to have been occasioned by very distressing political and family circumstances. As far as we can see through the mists of the ancient records referring to those times, it is probable, that, by the retirement of Keby from the cares of royalty, the crown of Cornwall descended to his younger brother Melyan. This sovereign, with his son Melor, was cut off by a maternal uncle who usurped the throne. This unfortunate occurrence is said to have induced Keby to fly from Cornwall. Having spent four years in Ireland, he ultimately retired to the Isle of Anglesea. There, says Leland, "he fixed his abode, and a humble one at first; but the king of the Isle, in pity to the poorness of it, liberally presented him with a castle, which stood in the very vicinity. In consequence of this

* "The inhabitants of Tregoney keep his festival even at the present moment. This is unknown, indeed, to the very inhabitants themselves, who suppose they are keeping the feast of the adjoining chapel of Cornelly, in the parish of Probus, because Cornelly has its feast upon the same day, the first Sunday after Michaelmas. But the feast is pointed out to be St. Keby's by the concurrence of the parish of Kea, the church of which is dedicated to the saint of Tregoney, in the observance of the saint of Tregoney's day. 'St. Key,' notes Norden, 57, 'in records, St. Keby.'"—WHITAKER'S "Cathedral of Cornwall," vol. ii., p. 54.

donation, a small monastery was formed within the castle, which was afterwards called from his name *caer Keby*, or "Keby's castle." Here he ended his days, giving his name to the church and village. From the sanctity of his life, the headland which is immediately opposite to Ireland, and near which he lived, was called "Holy-head," a name which it retains to the present day.*

Keby, commonly called, in accordance with the superstitions of the succeeding times, St. Keby, is said to have exerted himself with great success against Pelagianism; and considering the prominent character which his teacher Hilary sustained in that controversy, there is every reason to believe this tradition to be correct. His life appears to have been eminently useful and holy; yet how slender is the information which history has preserved respecting it! How different in this respect from the trumpet tongue of fame, announcing the blasting progress of the warrior, or gilding with false glory the unholy ravages of ambition!

About this time, also, lived Ninian. Filled with holy zeal, he determined, even in the midst of the troubles to which his country was exposed, to carry the Gospel to the Picts, then inhabiting the southern parts of Scotland. Gildas speaks of this people as being, before their conversion, a very savage race, "wearing more hair on their faces than they had clothes on their bodies." Yet Ninian is reported to have converted many of these barbarous people from their idolatry, and to have founded a church at Witherne, on the coast of Galloway, which long remained as a monument of his successful exertions.†

Another person of distinguished piety and usefulness, who lived during this period, was Patrick, commonly called "the apostle of Ireland." He was born at Kirkpatrick in Scotland. His British name, given at his baptism, was *Succath*, that is, "valiant in war." He was in early life taken prisoner by some pirates, carried into Ireland, and sold as a

* WHITAKER'S "Cathedral of Cornwall," vol. i., p. 279, and vol. ii., pp. 32-57.

† CHURTON'S "Early English Church," p. 18.

slave. Here he continued six years, and acquired the Irish language. Escaping from slavery, after an interval of two years, he formed the benevolent purpose of converting the Irish. He is said to have spent *thirty-five* years in preparatory studies on the continent, under the direction of his mother's uncle, Martin of Tours, who ordained him deacon, and of Germanus, who ordained him priest. About A.D. 430, Celestine, bishop of Rome, ordained Peladius bishop of Ireland. Finding little success there, he abandoned the mission, and crossed over to the Picts in Galloway, among whom he died not long after the mission of Ninian. Patrick succeeded him in his first field of labour, having been ordained bishop of Ireland by the same prelate Celestine. On that occasion, he gave him the name of *Patricius*, intending to express his honourable family descent, and to give weight to his commission. Patrick arrived in Ireland, A.D. 441; and his first convert was Sinell, the eighth king in succession from the renowned Cormac, of Leinster. He proceeded to Dublin, and thence into Ulster, where a large barn was fitted up as a church, which afterwards became the famous abbey of Saul. After seven years he returned to Britain, where he is said to have exerted himself to put down the Pelagian heresy. He then sailed again to Ireland, with several assistants in the ministry, where he was so successful, that idolatry was entirely exterminated. He next visited Rome, to give an account of his success; and, having returned, spent the remainder of his life between the monasteries of Armagh and Saul.* It is very difficult to give any thing beyond a mere outline of the labours of these holy men, on account of the numerous miracles and strange wonders which superstitious writers have incorporated into the history of their lives. It is, however, clear that, after the mission of Patrick, the Irish, who were before ignorant of arts and letters, became acquainted with both; and the light of Christianity, once kindled there, has never since entirely expired.

During this period, also, about the year 420, lived Fastidius, who was a British bishop, and is supposed to have

* TIMPSON'S "British Ecclesiastical History," p. 35.

resided at London. Very few particulars have been preserved respecting him. His name is now chiefly remarkable on account of his being the only Christian teacher among the ancient Britons, of whom any doctrinal treatise yet remains. He has left a short piece on "The Character of a Christian Life," addressed to a pious widow, named Fatalis ; in which, after modestly excusing his own want of knowledge and little skill, and begging her to accept his household bread, since he cannot offer her the finest flour, he shows, with very plain and good arguments, that Christians are called to imitate Him whom they worship ; that without a life of piety and uprightness it is vain to presume on the mercy of God, or to boast of the name of Christian ; and that it was always the rule of God's dealings with mankind, to love righteousness and hate iniquity.* As it may be interesting to have a specimen of the practical theology of this age, the following extracts are given from the work above-mentioned :—

"It is the will of God," says he, "that His people should be holy, and apart from all stain of unrighteousness ; so righteous, so merciful, so pure, so unspotted by the world, so single-hearted, that the Heathen should find no fault in them ; but say, with wonder, 'Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom He hath chosen for His inheritance.'

"We read in the evangelist, that one came to our Saviour, and asked Him what he should do to gain eternal life. The answer he received was, 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.' Our Lord did not say, 'Keep faith only.' For if faith is all that is required, it is over-much to say that the commandments must be kept. But far be it from me that I should suppose my Lord to have taught overmuch ! Let this be said only by those whose sins have numbered them with the children of perdition.

"Let no man, then, deceive or mislead his brother : except a man is righteous, he hath not life ; except he keep the commandments of Christ, he hath no part with Him. A Christian is one who shows mercy to all ; who is provoked

* CHURTON'S "Early English Church," p. 16.

by no wrong ; who suffers not the poor in this world to be oppressed ; who relieves the wretched, and succours the needy ; who mourns with mourners, and feels the pain of another as his own ; who is moved to tears by the sight of another's tears ; whose house is open to all ; whose table is spread for all the poor ; whose good deeds all men know ; whose wrongful dealing no man feels ; who serves God day and night, and ever meditates upon His precepts ; who is made poor to all the world, that he may be rich towards God ; who is content to be inglorious among men, that he may appear glorious before God and His angels ; who has no deceit in his heart ; whose soul is simple and undefiled, and his conscience faithful and pure ; whose whole mind rests on God ; whose whole hope is fixed on Christ, desiring heavenly things rather than earthly, and leaving human things to lay hold on things divine."

He concludes this excellent character of a Christian life, by applying it to the good widow to whom it is addressed : "If all those who are called Christians ought to be such as I describe, you need not be told what kind of widow you ought to be ; for if you are indeed Christ's widow, you ought to be a pattern to all who lead a Christian life. What Christ's widow ought to be, the apostle tells you : 'She that is a widow indeed trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.' And elsewhere the same apostle marks out the deeds and conversation of a true widow : 'Let a widow be chosen who is well reported of for good works : if she have brought up children ;' (that is, if she have brought them up to God ;) 'if she have lodged strangers ; if she have washed the saints' feet ; if she have relieved the afflicted ; if she have diligently followed every good work.'

"Be, then, you such as the Lord has taught you to be ; such as the apostle would have set forth as a pattern. Be holy, humble, and quiet, and employed, without ceasing, in works of mercy and righteousness. Above all, ever study the commandments of your Lord ; earnestly give yourself to prayers and psalms ; that, if it be possible, no one may ever

find you employed but in reading or in prayer. And when you are so employed, remember me."

From the scanty information which we possess respecting this period, we cannot ascertain with precision what amount of scriptural knowledge was possessed by the ministers generally, nor how far they preached the pure Gospel of Christ. We are also equally uncertain as to what extent the people were truly evangelized and brought to God. It is, however, evident, that some measure of the knowledge of the Gospel, accompanied by an outward and professed reception of its truth, had extended from beyond the northern extremity of Roman Britain, to the extreme west of Wales and Cornwall; and although most of the accounts which have come down to us are disfigured by strange tales of puerile superstitions and incredible miracles, there is no good reason for charging these faults on that age, but rather on that which succeeded it, when these narratives were written, and transmitted to posterity. Contrariwise, a general view of all the information we possess, inclines us to believe that a church, sound in the faith, and zealous in promoting the glorious kingdom of the Saviour among men, was established in Britain in the apostolic age; that a knowledge of the truth rapidly spread through the greater part of the island; and that, although weakened by the Arian and Pelagian heresies, a very considerable amount of Christian knowledge and influence was preserved in Britain up to the time when it was abandoned by the Romans.

As, however, it is evident, that the religion of Christ can only exist in its purity when it is allowed the entire supremacy over the mind and conduct of individual members of the church; and as any compromise of its essential truths is invariably attended with a proportionate diminution of that divine energy from which all its real power is derived; it is to be feared, that what was perhaps the well-intended patronage of Constantine, by bringing the leading ministers of the church into contact with the most powerful, worldly and political influences, detracted greatly from their spirituality and simplicity of mind; and thus, on the

whole, inflicted an injury, rather than conferred a benefit, on the church.

Nor can it be but that the afflictive circumstances which preceded and attended the withdrawal of the Romans, had an unfavourable effect on the Christian cause. The religion of peace, meekness, and love, does not flourish in times of discord, commotion, and anarchy. Notwithstanding all this, it appears, as we have said, that Christianity continued to be recognised, and in some tolerable measure influential, through the entire period of the Roman government.

As in this age of the church the ministers and members were alike exposed to various tendencies to stray from the truth, and as the isolated and independent condition of the several churches afforded opportunity to individuals who were weak in the faith, or mistaken in judgment, to receive and entertain various errors,—a danger which was greatly increased by the scarcity of copies of the Holy Scriptures,—it is manifest, that no unbounded reliance can be placed upon the correctness of the opinions or practices of the ministers of the church, even in this early age. The entire history of the period cautions us against this error, and teaches us to fix our faith on the word of truth alone, and to be guided in our judgment solely by the teaching of the sacred canon.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ARRIVAL AND ASCENDANCY OF THE SAXONS.

THERE is no portion of British history more barren of authentic records than the fifth century, during which this island was abandoned by Rome, and became subject to the Saxons.

From the death of Constantine the Great, the fortunes of Rome appear to have rapidly declined. The partition of the empire amongst his three sons was not repaired by the ultimate ascendancy of Constantius, an event which resulted from a series of treasons and murders. This prince, not satisfied that Christianity should enjoy perfect toleration, enacted severe laws against Paganism. In A.D. 356, he made it a capital offence to offer sacrifices, or to pay any sort of worship to idols; and in subsequent years he made sundry enactments which were intended to protect and promote the Christian faith. Julian, commonly called "the Apostate," who succeeded Constantius, laboured to restore Paganism, during his short reign of twenty months. After his death, Jovian revoked his laws and re-established and protected Christianity. During the progress of these events, the empire, weakened and divided, was attacked on all sides by Barbarian armies. The genius of Valentinian, for a while, drove back the torrent, and maintained the honour of the Roman arms. It was during this period, when Rome was struggling to maintain her proud pre-eminence, that England was first assailed by the Saxons. This people had been mentioned, A.D. 141, by Ptolemy the Alexandrian, as inhabiting a territory on the north side of the Elbe, and three small islands at the mouth of that river.* They were evidently a branch of the great Scythian or Gothic family. Extending their territory by degrees from the banks of the

* TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. i., p. 89.

Elbe, they made themselves masters of those regions which are at present known as Westphalia, Saxony, East and West Friesland, Holland, and Zealand, prior to their permanent settlement in Britain.*

The Saxons, thus increasing their population and territory, might not unnaturally have been expected to present a formidable appearance to their neighbours; yet, when we consider their barbarous manners and general ignorance of the useful arts, it becomes matter of surprise that such a people should have directed their attention to maritime pursuits, and have made rapid progress in practical navigation, so as to have been dreaded for their powerful rivalry by the principal naval states of that age.

Their situation on the sea-coast, and the possession of many fine harbours, might indeed have led to the construction of small vessels, either for the purposes of a limited commerce, or of petty warfare: but it has been, with great reason, supposed that the Saxons were impelled to attempt important naval enterprises by an event arising out of the conduct of the Roman emperor Probus towards the Franks.

Adopting the policy frequently exercised by Rome towards Barbarian states, this prince transported a great number of these people, whom he had vanquished, from the banks of

* "Between Holstein and the Chersonesus, or Jutland, dwelt a people known, even in Tacitus's time, by the name of Angles. According to this account, which we have taken from Bede, the Angles inhabited that small province in the kingdom of Denmark, and duchy of Sleswick, which is called at this day Angel, and of which the city of Flensburgh is the metropolis. Liudebergius, in his Epistles, styles this *Little England*; and Ethelward, who wrote about the year 950, speaking of the ancient habitation of the Angles, 'Old Anglia,' says he, 'lies between the Saxons and Giots: the metropolis of this country is, by the Saxons, called Sleswick; but, by the Danes, Haithby. Britain took the name of those by whom it was conquered, and is, therefore, now called Anglia.' The same writer adds, that Hengist and Horsa came from the country of the Angles into Britain. When the Saxons first came out of the Chersonesus, going in quest of new settlements, the Angles joined them; and, in process of time, became one united nation. Hence they are, by most authors, comprised under the general name of SAXONS; though some distinguish them under the compound name of Anglo-Saxons."—"Ancient Universal History," vol. xvii., p. 110.

the Rhine to the shores of the Euxine Sea, where he assigned them lands to cultivate. But, growing weary of living after the Roman manner, and burning with an unconquerable desire to revisit their native country, they seized a fleet of vessels which happened to be in their neighbourhood; and, although very imperfectly acquainted with navigation, they sailed through the Bosphorus and the Mediterranean Sea, where they made occasional descents, and pillaged the coasts of Asia and Greece; then, passing over to Africa, they landed in different places; but, meeting with vigorous opposition from the Roman troops in that province, they sailed over to Sicily, and took and plundered the city of Syracuse. At length they succeeded in passing through the Straits of Gibraltar and, entering the ocean, plundered the coasts of Gaul and Spain, and finally reached their home on the Rhine, laden with immense booty.* This event took place about A.D. 280.

The effects of this expedition are strikingly given by a living author: "In this singular enterprise, a system to endure for ages had its unpremeditated birth. It discovered to these adventurers, and to their neighbours, to all who heard and could imitate, that from the Roman colonies a rich harvest of spoil might be gleaned by those who would seek for it at sea. It likewise removed the veil of terror that hung over distant oceans and foreign expeditions. These Franks had desolated every province almost with impunity; they had plunder to display which must have fired the avarice of every needy spectator; they had acquired skill, which those who joined them might soon inherit; and it is exceedingly probable that the same men, embarking again with new followers, evinced, by fresh booty, the practicability of similar attempts. On land, the Roman tactics and discipline were generally invincible; but, at sea, they who most frequent it, are usually the most expert and successful. The Saxons perceived this consequence. Their situation tempted them to make the trial; and its success is clearly shown in the vigorous efforts which were put forth

* "Ancient Universal History," vol. xvii., p. 263.

to check it, and in the important territorial and wealthy acquisitions to which it led."*

Soon after this, the piratical excursions of the Saxons became so harassing to the inhabitants of Britain and the adjacent coasts, that, in the reign of Diocletian, a Roman officer was appointed to repel their attacks. His title was *Comes Littoris Saxonici per Britanniam*, "count of the sea-shore," or "count of the Saxon Coast in Britain."† For the effectual accomplishment of this object, a fleet was placed under his command, and several forts were built along the coast.‡ The person invested with this dignity was one of the principal Roman commanders in Britain, who had a regular court of officers, with a competent number of land and sea forces.§

The first person appointed to this dignity was Carausius, a Menapian,|| of mean origin, but of approved valour as a soldier, and of great skill as a pilot. The integrity of this officer did not equal his rapid promotion. In the performance of his official duty, he is said to have freely allowed the passage of the Saxon piratical vessels until they had effected their object by despoiling the coast; and, on their return, he assailed them when laden with booty. By these means he amassed immense riches. But, his conduct being made known to the imperial government, the emperor Maximian actually gave orders for his execution. These, however, were defeated by the increasing audacity of the delinquent; for, on being apprised of those proceedings, Carausius boldly

* TURNER'S "Anglo-Saxons," vol. i., p. 144. London, 1836.

† GIBBON'S "Decline and Fall," vol. ii., p. 9. London, 1823.

‡ These were nine in number, and occupied the following situations:—

1. *Banadunum*, Brancaster. 2. *Gariannonum*, Burghcastle, near Yarmouth. 3. *Othona*, Ithanchester, not far from Maldon. 4. *Regulbium*, Reculver. 5. *Rutupæ*, Richborough. 6. *Dubræ*, Dover. 7. *Lemannæ*, Limne. 8. *Andecida*, Hastings, or East Bourne. 9. *Portus Adurnus*, Portsmouth.

§ "Pictorial History of England," vol. i., p. 90.

|| There was a tribe of Belgians near the Meuse called Menapii, in whose country the Romans had a station called *Castellum Menapiorum*, now Kessel. There was also a city (and the only one we know of the name) Menapia, now Wexford, in Ireland; and as Carausius is distinctly called a "citizen of Menapia," he was in all probability an Irishman.

threw off his allegiance, sailed with his fleet from Boulogne, where they frequently lay, and, having gained over the troops in Britain to his interest, he assumed the imperial purple, and set the power of Rome at defiance.

Nor had Carausius miscalculated his means of support. By a treaty with the Saxons and Franks, he secured the friendship of those powerful nations. Possessed of a numerous fleet, he more than equalled any means of attack which Rome had to oppose to him on the ocean; and the insular position of Britain saved him from every other. Thus, strange as it may appear, Britain was wrested from the imperial dominion, and maintained in absolute enfranchisement until the death of the usurper, which took place A.D. 293, about seven years after he had declared himself independent. Carausius was succeeded by his murderer, Alectus. He had all his predecessor's boldness and ambition, but was greatly his inferior in general ability. He, however, sustained himself against the attacks of his powerful foes for three years; but at length was defeated and slain by the emperor Constantius, A.D. 296, and Britain again became a province of Rome.*

The alliance which subsisted, during this period, between the Britons and Saxons, was productive of the most important consequences to the latter nation, especially with regard to their maritime enterprises. Carausius, feeling that whatever weakened and harassed his enemies must benefit him, diligently cultivated the friendship of the Saxons and Franks, and gave them ships and experienced officers, who taught them navigation and the art of naval combat. With these advantages he encouraged their application to maritime affairs, and the Saxons had sufficient inclination to this new path of action. They had only wanted tuition and encouragement. Their predatory attacks therefore became more extensive and formidable. Every coast which did not own the dominion of Carausius, was open to their incursions, and suffered from their ferocity. The plunder which they acquired, stimulated them to renewed efforts, and at the

* GIBBON'S "Decline and Fall," vol. ii., p. 12.

same time prepared them for greater exertions. Ten years occupied in this manner must have produced a great improvement in the maritime tactics of the Saxons.

The residence of Constantius Chlorus at York, the accession of Constantine the Great to the throne of the West at that place, and the martial vigour of Theodosius, might have saved Britain, during the earliest part of the fourth century, from Saxon incursion; but, about A.D. 351, Magnentius, having murdered Constans and assumed the imperial dignity, endeavoured also to maintain his elevation by an alliance with the Saxons and Franks. By this means, he obtained from these nations an important accession to his armies, and he, in return, afforded them every encouragement and protection in his power. Thus the Saxons progressed in martial prowess, and particularly in naval warfare.

The tranquillity of Britain, which had been restored by the talents and energy of Theodosius, was disturbed, almost immediately on his leaving the island, by the treason of Maximus. Having aspired to the dignity of the purple, supporting his pretensions with success for some time in Britain, he, however, found this island a theatre too confined for a contest which involved the sovereignty of the world. He therefore collected all his available troops, and, augmenting his army with the flower of the British youth, embarked for the continent. The result was unpropitious: he lost his crown and his life. Scarcely any of the troops returned to the island, the military resources of which were necessarily greatly weakened by this event. The death of Maximus took place about A.D. 388.

Soon after this time the Scots and Picts, who had for a long season harassed the north frontier of Roman Britain, and whose incursions had been scarcely prevented by the famous wall which had been built across the country, even when it was guarded by the Roman legions, now poured their desolating hosts into the southern part of the island, and ravaged the country to a frightful extent. Stilicho, the able but guilty minister of Honorius, sent a supply of troops, that they might repel these destructive assaults, and also

assist in guarding the coast against Saxon piracy. This relief, however, was of short duration. The Alans, Suevians, and Vandals, having assailed different portions of the Roman empire that lay nearest to Italy, those troops were withdrawn from Britain, to aid in their defence. In this situation the natives felt that, as they could not rely on foreign support, they must exert their own means of self-defence. To effect this, they elected a sovereign. The person chosen was called Mark, an officer of great credit among them; but he was assassinated within a few days, and Gratian nominated to succeed him. In four months he shared the same fate; and Constantine, a common soldier, selected merely on account of his name, was elevated to the sovereignty. Notwithstanding his great and sudden exaltation, he proved himself to be not altogether unworthy his high station. Assembling his forces, he compelled the Scots and Picts to retire into their own country; and in all probability might have succeeded in maintaining the independence of his nation and his throne, had he been satisfied with the extent of the one and the glory of the other. But, intoxicated with success, he formed a design of making himself master of the whole empire. For this purpose, he passed over into Gaul and Spain with the most formidable force he could raise. There both he and his army were destroyed. This occurred about A.D. 407.

After the departure of Constantine, the barbarians again invaded Britain, which declared itself independent, after seeking in vain for assistance from Rome. The emperor Honorius appears to have approved of this conduct; for by his letters he permitted, and even advised, them to provide for their own safety.* The Britons on this occasion acted in a manner worthy of their ancestors. They armed themselves, and proclaimed their national independence. With the successful valour of youthful liberty, they drove the fierce invaders from their cities.† Though they made this favourable beginning, the Britons were twice afterwards compelled to solicit assistance from Rome; which having been granted

* "Ancient Universal History," vol. xvii., p. 105.

† TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. i., p. 179.

for a brief space, the imperial troops finally withdrew from the island.

It is very difficult to ascertain the exact chronology of these events. The following are the opinions of the principal authors, in reference to the time when the three great irruptions of the Scots and Picts took place, that called for the last assistance from Rome.

	Usher.	Camden.	R. Cirencester.	Stillingfleet.	Turner.
First.	393	411	392	406	398
Second.	396	420	396	425	405
Third.	431	431	442	443	410

With this diversity of judgment before us, we shall not presume to decide the point ; nor is it indeed very material to our object. Be that as it may, it will be necessary to remove the misapprehension which generally obtains, as to the real military and political condition of the Britons at this period. It has been supposed, that, being drained of all her most martial sons by the successive armies raised here and carried over to the continent, she became pusillanimous and feeble ; and the extravagant lamentations preserved by Gildas would support this view, which is also supposed to be confirmed by the invitation given to the Saxons. But a careful investigation of the subject will amply prove, that the weakness of Britain did not arise from any absence of military spirit, but from internal jealousies and divisions.

It is indeed absurd to think that a country so spiritless and incapable of self-defence as Britain has been described to be at this period, should have furnished such a constant succession of claimants for the imperial throne. Gildas himself, while furnishing evidence which has led to this erroneous conclusion, has in one single sentence snpplied an antidote to it. He says, whilst the Britons were "impotent in repelling foreign foes, they were bold and invincible in civil war : " * a statement which clearly shows the cause of the national weakness. This was a consequence naturally resulting from the state of the aboriginal British tribes, as well as from the circumstances of that part of the popula-

* GILDAS, p. 21.

tion which had been more immediately under the dominion of Rome.

It was the custom of the victorious Romans to partition out their conquests into districts. These were called *civitates*. Each had its capital city, in which resided a senate, whose jurisdiction extended over all that section of country. Britain was divided into thirty-three such districts, and was consequently under as many municipal administrations. From the existence and operation of those local authorities, it in all probability became divided into as many independent republics, when the Roman government ceased to direct the affairs of Britain. That this event did happen, we have some evidence in the fact,—that Honorius, emperor of Rome, when he had to reply to the application of the Britons, directed his letters to the *civitates* of the island.

Notwithstanding the great alteration produced on the habits and manners of the Britons by Roman influence and cultivation, there can be no doubt but that the different tribes of the primitive inhabitants remained, to a very considerable extent, divided into clans, and subject to native princes, having some resemblance to the original British nations. Hence it is extremely probable that those two kinds of division occasionally affected, controlled, and strengthened each other; so that many insuperable obstacles existed to any proper consolidation of British power, and consequently to the means of resisting any foreign aggression. These circumstances solve the difficulty to which allusion has been made. They prove that the cause of the national weakness was not the want of a military spirit or of warlike means, but that it was division, disunion, and anarchy. While powerless in great national wars, they were valorous in petty and local quarrels, according to the plain statement of Gildas. When we read, therefore, of those dolorous applications to Rome for assistance against the inroads of the Scots and Picts which the ancient British writer has recorded, and which are so generally believed, it appears evident that they could only have ema-

nated from some particular district of the country, and ought not to be considered as completely representing the sentiments and desires of the British people.

After the final retirement of the Romans, the state of anarchy and confusion into which the island was thrown, gradually called forth the emulation of the different classes, as well as the spirited exertions of the several claimants for power. As far as our means of information will enable us to decide, it appears probable that two great confederacies prevailed over all minor opposition, and stood opposed to each other in the southern parts of the country. The first was the Roman party, headed by Aurelius Ambrosius,* a chieftain of imperial descent, who claimed or acquired the regal dignity: the other was principally composed of the descendants of the ancient Britons, headed by the famous Vortigern or Gwrtheryn. While these factions were struggling for ascendancy, the Scots and Picts continued their predatory warfare, and reduced the country to the greatest misery, until the Britons, roused by necessity, fell upon their invaders in successive parties, and compelled them to retire into their own country.† During this time a circumstance occurred, which we have every reason to attribute to accident, though generally considered in a different aspect. Whilst Vortigern was contending with Aurelius, three Saxon vessels, called Cyules,‡ arrived from Germany on the British coast. These were commanded by two brothers, descendants of Woden, named Hengist and Horsa. As their numbers were too few for conquest, their visit was in all probability for the purpose of a sudden irruption and a hasty depredation.§ They arrived at Ebbsfleet, (now an inland spot, but then situated on a navigable river,) in the Isle of Thanet, near Richborough. It happened that, just at this time, Vortigern and his chiefs were holding a council as to the best means of repelling their enemies; and it was proposed to employ these Saxon adventurers as subsidiary soldiers.

* PALGRAVE'S "History of England," vol. i., p. 29.

† BEDE, vol. i., p. 14.

‡ From whence our term "keels."

§ NENNIUS says, they were exiles. Section 31.

This was agreed to; the Isle of Thanet was assigned for their residence, and food and clothing were promised them. Their first operations were perfectly successful; but ulterior objects required larger forces. The Saxons, therefore, recommended that a greater number of their countrymen should be invited over. To this advice assent was given by Vortigern, and readily complied with on the part of the Saxons. On the arrival of this reinforcement in seventeen of their largest vessels, a vast augmentation of territory was assigned them. Operations against the Scots and Picts were now conducted upon a larger scale, and with such great success, that they scarcely dared to venture on incursions into South Britain.

Up to this period, it does not appear that the Britons had reason to apprehend any danger from their new allies, or that the Saxons even presumed to think of making a settlement in Britain. But, forty more vessels having arrived, bringing a large additional force under a son of Hengist, there is reason to believe that Vortigern, having married Rowena, a daughter of the Saxon chief, determined to avail himself of the aid of the Saxons, in order firmly to establish his own dominion, and to curb those chiefs who had become jealous of his power. In the prosecution of this purpose, the Saxons saw the opportunity afforded for their own aggrandisement. They therefore demanded further territory and larger supplies. These not being granted to their satisfaction, they concluded a peace with the Scots, and turned their arms against the neighbouring Britons, ravaging the nearest cities from east to west.

These events compelled the Britons to adopt a wise and brave line of policy. They set aside Vortigern, as unfit to conduct the war, on account of his alliance by marriage with the family of Hengist: and appointed Vortimer his son to command the Britons. They fought a series of battles with varying success. On the whole, the Britons appear to have prevailed, and to have driven the Saxons out of the island.* After the battle of Ailsford, Hengist retired to the

* TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. i., p. 26.

Isle of Thanet, and thence embarked for Germany, where he is supposed to have remained five years. But Vortimer having been poisoned by his step-mother Rowena, and Vortigern * having resumed the government, he either invited Hengist to return to Britain, or that chieftain considering it a favourable opportunity, came back with a powerful Saxon force, and again landed on the coast of Kent.

This warlike leader, aware of the power of the Britons when united, had recourse to an infernal policy for the accomplishment of his purpose. Having made large professions of his amicable intentions, he invited the king his son-in-law, and all the principal British chieftains, to meet him, that a friendly alliance might be formed; at the same time he offered to dismiss any part of his forces, and to act just as they might require him. This assembly was held in what had been a large Heathen temple, but it was then used as a place for national conventions. The British chiefs, trusting to the faith of a treaty, and the sacredness of the place, came unarmed; while the Saxons had been instructed to conceal daggers under their drèsses. When all were assembled and engaged in drinking mead, the perfidious Saxon gave the pre-concerted signal: *Nimed eure saxes*, "Draw your swords;" and a dreadful carnage ensued. Four hundred and sixty British chieftains are stated to have fallen on the occasion, and Vortigern was for a while detained in the Saxon camp.†

The Saxons, according to the most authentic records of British history, now insisted on their own terms; and four of the principal towns in the island were delivered into their hands. Two years after this event, the Britons having rallied, a great battle was fought between them and the Saxons at Crayford, (A.D. 457,) which resulted in the total defeat of the former; and from that time Hengist may be considered to have established himself in possession of Kent. Notwithstanding so much has been said of the amazing prowess of this Saxon chief, and of the slaughter and devastation which he is affirmed to have carried to the remotest

* HUGHES's *Horæ Britannicæ*, vol. ii., p. 186.

† *Ibid.*, p. 188.

corners of the island; the simple and authentic events of his history afford no evidence of his having penetrated beyond the narrow confines of the district which he transmitted to his posterity. All the battles particularized by the Saxons were fought in Kent; and one of the last contests was even in the Isle of Thanet, in the very extremity of that little kingdom. These facts serve as proofs rather that the invaders had to struggle for existence on a very limited territory, than that they ravaged the whole country.

The great error into which the partial accounts of this period are almost certain to carry us, unless the utmost care and caution be exercised, is this,—to consider the island of Britain as one nation; while, on the contrary, nothing is more evident, than that, from the earliest ages, the island was divided among several independent tribes; that the Roman dominion did not totally destroy, or even greatly affect, those divisions; and that evident traces of them remained even long after the Norman Conquest.

At the death of Vortigern, which happened soon after the establishment of Hengist in Kent, Aurelius Ambrosius was appointed to the command of the British forces. He is said to have prosecuted the war with great talent and energy, until, by the help of successive importations of additional troops, the Saxons had subdued the greater part of the island.

It will not be necessary for us here to attempt even an outline of this protracted contest. It will be sufficient to give a brief statement of the limits of the several Saxon kingdoms, with the dates of their foundation.

1. KENT, founded by Hengist, A.D. 457: it contained the county of Kent.

2. SOUTH SAXONS, founded by Ella, A.D. 477: it included the counties of Surrey and Sussex.

3. WEST SAXONS, founded by Cerdic, A.D. 521: it contained the counties of Cornwall, Dorset, Devon, Somerset, Wilts., Hants., and Berks.

4. EAST SAXONS, founded by Erchewin, A.D. 527: it comprised Middlesex, Essex, and part of Hertfordshire.

5. **NORTHUMBERLAND**, founded by Ida, A.D. 547: it comprehended Yorkshire, Durham, Lancashire, Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Northumberland.

6. **EAST ANGLES**, founded by Uffa, A.D. 571: it included the counties of Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridge, and the Isle of Ely.

7. **MERCIA**, founded by Crida, A.D. 584: it contained the counties of Huntingdon, Rutland, Lincoln, Northampton, Leicester, Derby, Nottingham, Oxford, Chester, Salop, Gloucester, Worcester, Stafford, Warwick, Buckingham, Bedford, and part of Hertford.

These several states were formed by the arrival of successive bodies of invaders from the continent, who, having gradually subdued the divided Britons, thus parcelled out the island among themselves. This occupation of the country, as already intimated, was only effected by means of a long-continued and bloody war. The principal person who stands connected with the defence of the country during this period, is the famous prince Arthur, whose exploits have been described in all the flowers of poetic diction by the Bards, and have been disfigured and disguised by the romantic tales of Geoffry of Monmouth and other writers. Yet there can be no doubt that a prince of this name did exist; and, although neither so puissant a monarch, nor so mighty a warrior, as he has been represented, that he did, at the head of the British forces, offer a valiant but unsuccessful resistance to the progress of the Saxon invaders. Of the fact, that his success has been greatly over-rated by chroniclers and poets, no stronger proof can be required, than is found in the circumstance,—that, after his greatest and most useful achievement at Badon Hills, near Bath, where he defeated Cerdic, we hear nothing of his pursuing the vanquished foe: and it appears, that the only result of the victory was, the partial retardation of the onward march of the Saxon power. This is also evident in the various petty wars which he is said to have waged against different British clans,—an impolitic course, calculated as much to promote the interests of the national

enemy as his own direct opposition was intended to defeat it.

The kingdom of Northumberland was divided, on the death of Ida, into two independent sovereignties, Bernicia and Deira. It also appears that about A.D. 584, the great southern portion of the island was subdued, and separated into eight Saxon kingdoms. It must not, however, be supposed that this invasion, as it advanced, utterly exterminated the British population. This was not the case. We are in possession of certain and positive testimony, that great numbers who disdained submission retired to the western parts of Britain; and that in Cornwall and part of Devonshire, and especially in Wales, they mightily augmented the population, and retained for a long time an honourable independence.* Here they exulted in freedom, treasured up traditions of earlier times, sang the praises of heroes who had fallen in the unavailing defence of liberty, chanted prophecies of future and glorious success, and maintained unimpaired their government and their religion. The great bulk of the population could not thus have abandoned their homes, and found refuge in these remote parts of the island. It could neither have been the policy of such conquerors as the Saxons to compel whole nations to leave their peaceful home-steads; and such a general abandonment of country would not have been the voluntary choice of any people. A nation of warriors possessing nothing beyond their wives and their weapons, would, on settling in the country, require husbandmen, artisans, and menial servants; and would, accordingly, treat the vanquished people with such lenity as to secure for themselves these needful services. This was unquestionably the practice of the Saxons at their first localization in Britain; and, therefore, while we regard those new kingdoms as being truly Saxon, in their laws, government, manners, and religion, we must remember that a

* Up to the reign of Alfred, and even afterwards, the Britons still maintained their own kingdoms in Cornwall and part of Devonshire. It was not till Athelstan's reign that they finally lost Exeter.—TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. i., p. 329.

considerable portion of the arts, manners, and religion of the previous inhabitants remained, who, through the fortune of war, were reduced to a state of subjection and servitude.

But though every part of Britain did not, at this crisis, send forth its inhabitants in masses into the forests and mountain-fastnesses of the West; yet, as mildness and urbanity are not the virtues which usually characterize every class of conquerors, instances of individual escape from the harsh treatment of the oppressor would occasionally occur for many succeeding years; and the numbers of those who felt themselves personally aggrieved would thus gradually enlarge the original band of retiring Britons.

Having thus given a sketch of the means by which the Saxons obtained the government of England, we proceed to notice the manners and customs which they introduced.

However much we may desire to have a full picture of our Saxon ancestors in their Pagan and barbarous condition, we can now scarcely hope to obtain it. When converted and civilized, they might naturally be expected not to have been solicitous about the preservation of memorials that concerned their former state of degradation. Yet some faint outlines of this and of their character may be drawn from fragments of information which, by accident or otherwise, have been preserved to our own times.

The Saxons were remarkable for fearlessness of mind, and extreme activity of body. Julian, who had fought against them, celebrates their vehemence and valour; and Zosimus, their contemporary, expresses the general feeling of his age, when he ranks them as superior to others in energy, strength, and warlike fortitude.

The maritime occupations of this people tended greatly to strengthen the ferocity and daring which were constituent parts of their general character. The roaring storm and rolling waves of the German Ocean, when navigated in such frail barks, must have presented objects as calculated to inspire terror, as were the numerous enemies they were

certain to encounter on every shore, in the course of their predatory career. But all these difficulties they braved, not on one or two particular occasions, but as a part of their constant and daily practice; a practice carried to such an extent, that, in their light skiffs, they would often run eighty or a hundred miles up a river into an enemy's country; and, for the purpose of eluding a superior force, or of securing a richer booty, they found no difficulty in carrying their vessels overland to another river, and thus would effect their return to the sea in a different direction.

Of the Saxons, an author of the fifth century says to a friend, who was opposed to them: "You see as many piratical leaders as you behold rowers; for they all command, obey, teach and learn the art of pillage. Hence, after your greatest caution, still greater care is requisite. This enemy is fiercer than any other: if you be unguarded, they attack; if prepared, they elude you. They despise the opposing, and destroy the unwary; if they pursue, they overtake; if they fly, they escape. Shipwrecks discipline them, not deter; they do not merely know, they are familiar with, all the dangers of the sea: a tempest gives them security and success; for it divests the meditated land of the apprehension of a descent. In the midst of waves and threatening rocks, they rejoice at their peril, because they hope to surprise."* The Saxons are indeed seldom mentioned by the writers of the fourth and fifth centuries, without some epithets which express a superiority over other men in their achievements or their courage.

Among the several Saxon nations a kind of caste obtained, which divided society into various clearly-defined gradations. Speaking of them as they were found after they had settled in England, we meet with three distinct ranks or classes of society, which were so strongly divided by the laws of caste, that no marriage could on any account take place between persons in the different ranks.

The first of these was that from which their kings were taken; for, though the Anglo-Saxon kings were elective and

* TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. i., p. 205.

not hereditary, they were usually chosen from a particular family or race. The chieftains of this dynasty were all descended from the deified monarch of the Asi, Odin or Woden.

The second great caste among the Anglo-Saxons were the nobility, who bore the title of *eorls*, or *eorleundmen*, or *thane-born*. This was the aristocracy. But such distinguished birth required the addition of property to confer its full degree of dignity. Although this noble descent raised a man above the lowest rank or villanage, it did not place him on a level with those who possessed an absolute property in land. Such persons, therefore, while really belonging to the second caste, were generally esteemed as occupying a position between the nobility and the third caste.

This third class was called *twihaendmen*, and consisted of the *ceorls*, or people. These were generally engaged in predial or agricultural services. They were attached to the soil, and occupied a position which it is very difficult either fully to understand or to describe. They are said to have had a definite and recognised estate in the soil; so that, whilst the *villain* performed his services, he was not to be removed from his land, neither was a higher rent or a greater proportion of labour to be exacted from him than that which was due, and had been customary. Thus the *ceorl* was in some sense free; and yet he could be given, bequeathed, bought, or sold. But this was always to be done only as he was attached to the land which he occupied, and from which he was not to be removed. This caste was divided from the *eorls* by strongly-marked distinctions. The declaration of one *ceorl* was equal to that of six *ceorls*; the life of one *ceorl* equal to that of six *ceorls*; and so in other matters.

It has been doubted whether the *ceorls* were generally of Saxon or of British origin. Sir Francis Palgrave, who has examined the subject with care, seems to incline to the supposition that the *ceorls* were originally the British cultivators of the soil, but into whose class individuals and families of Anglo-Saxon birth and blood may have been from time to time aggregated and introduced.* This supposition is

* "Pictorial History of England," vol. i., p. 249.

strongly supported by the fact, that they were entirely destitute of political power.

Beneath these, there was yet another class, called *theowes*, the *servi* of Doomsday. These did not even rank among the people. Their condition was similar to that of the Negro, or the Roman slave. Some of the *theowes* may have been the offspring of British serfs ; but by far the greater portion consisted of freemen who had forfeited their liberty in consequence of their crimes.

Marriage was permitted only between persons of the same caste. Nobles married nobles. They were extremely jealous of their race ; and the severest penalties prohibited intrusions of one rank into the others.

Notwithstanding the existence of this caste, the language of the Saxons clearly shows that their government had originally been patriarchal. The words which denote authority also express age : *eldest* is used as synonymous with *greatest*. Hence, in the Saxon Scriptures, "the phrase 'a certain ruler' is, in the Saxon Gospel, *sum ealdor*. The contest between the disciples of Christ, which should 'be the greatest,' is expressed in the Saxon, which should be the *yldest*. The aged were the primitive chiefs and governors among the Saxons ; and, therefore, the terms expressing age were used to denote dignity so habitually, that they were retained in common phrase, even after the custom of connecting power with seniority had become obsolete."*

According to the testimony of Bede, the Saxon tribes seem to have been under the government of their several chiefs ; and had no king except in time of war, when a person was specially appointed. His words are : "Those ancient Saxons have no king, but several lords that rule their nation : and when any war happens, they cast lots indifferently ; and on whomsoever the lot falls, him they follow and obey during the war. But as soon as the war is ended, all those lords are again equal in power."†

Of the ancient Saxon laws little can be said ; but, judg-

* TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. i., p. 209.

† BEDE, lib. v., cap. 10.

ing from what took place soon after their settlement in England, we may fairly presume that a pecuniary compensation was the general redress for personal injuries. This certainly shows that the government had taken upon itself, in its legislative capacity, to enact penalties, and, in its executive capacity, to apply the laws in adjudging and punishing in such cases; and that the award was not in any instance left to the vindictive feelings of the individual injured. It also betokens a state of society in which property, although increasing, was not possessed to such an extent as to destroy the salutary effect which the payment of pecuniary fines was intended to produce.

There is, however, one feature in the manners of the ancient Saxons worthy of notice,—the equality of rank which they allowed to women, and the chastity for which they were remarkable. Their wives frequently took part in their gravest councils, even accompanied them in their wars, and were allowed on the most important occasions to tender their opinion and advice. The severest penalties were attached to every violation of female purity. Not only was adultery punished with a most horrid death, and a similar punishment awarded to the seducer, but even those familiarities between the sexes which are generally esteemed innocent, were strictly prohibited to unmarried persons.

It is also said that a practice prevailed amongst them, which their descendants in Britain, even at the present day, have not altogether forgotten. “There was no national or provincial assembly held, no civil or religious festival observed, no birth-day, marriage, or funeral properly solemnized, no treaty of alliance or friendship entered into, in which *feasting* did not bear a principal part.”* It was at the table that they consulted together on their most important concerns. “On the morrow they re-considered the resolutions of the preceding night; supposing,” adds the same historian, “that the proper time to take each other’s opinions was when the soul was too open for disguise, and to

* PELLOUTIER, as quoted in MALLETT’S “Northern Antiquities,” vol. i., p. 261.

determine when it was too cautious to err." At these festivals they emptied what was called "the cup of ODIN," to obtain victory; then the cups of NIORD and of FREY, for a plentiful season; after which, several used to quaff off another to BRAGE, the god of eloquence and poetry. Thus early do we find the existence of a practice which evidently gave birth to the drinking of healths amongst us. Many other usages might be traced to the habits of our forefathers at this early period, did our limits allow a more extended investigation into their manners and customs. The preceding must suffice.

It is only necessary to remark, in conclusion, that "the change effected in Britain by the Saxon invasion was much greater than that produced in any other part of western Europe by the irruption of northern conquerors. In every other place they soon conformed to the religion, and intermingled with the population, of the vanquished provinces; so that a mixed speech presently grew up, retaining more traces of its Roman than of its Barbaric origin. In Britain it was otherwise. The Roman language, customs, and manners, with all the Paganism that remained, as well as all the Christianity that existed, were at once swept away from the largest and finest portion of Britain in which the several Saxon tribes had established themselves. Here their language, with scarcely any alteration, obtained general currency; their superstition, in all its native darkness and immorality, prevailed. That they did in some cases intermix with the native Britons, there can be no reasonable doubt; but this certainly did not take place to such an extent as to exercise any perceptible influence. This remarkable and singular fact is to be explained by the condition in which they found the island. During the decline of the Roman empire, then in the last stage of its decay, the Britons had shaken off an authority which, easy and beneficial as it had proved upon the whole, was insufferable to their national feeling,—a stubborn and haughty feeling, but of a noble kind. They succeeded, to their own undoing. A deplorable state of anarchy and intestine war ensued; during

which, the greater part of those persons who considered the Latin as their mother tongue, either fled the country, or were cut off. The Britons were divided into a great number of petty kingdoms, and their princes animated with as much hostility against each other as against the invaders. But they were generally too high-minded to brook that forced and ignominious incorporation to which the Gauls, and Spaniards, and Italians had submitted ; and, gradually retiring to the western peninsula, to the land of lakes, and to the Highlands of Scotland, their language ceased to be spoken in that great division of the island which now obtained the name of England from its Anglian conquerors.”*

* SOUTHEY’S “Book of the Church,” p. 13.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RELIGION OF THE SAXONS.

IN attempting to give some account of the Paganism of the Saxons, it will be necessary to refer to that mythological system which pervaded all the northern nations, and which, subject to some modifications in these several countries, continued in operation, until they were dispersed by the advancing light of Christianity.

In this investigation, although there exist many and serious difficulties, we are not left to the vague inferences that may be drawn from slender and unconnected notices; we have the fullest information on all the particulars of the system from the most competent authorities,—its believers and professors themselves.

Yet, while this is the case with respect to the system itself, its origin is enveloped in obscurity and fable. The source from whence it issued, the period of its promulgation, and the agents by whom it was planted in the various countries where it flourished, are historical difficulties that still remain to be solved.

The principal deity in this scheme is Woden or Odin; and the idea entertained of the origin of the whole system will be regulated by the opinion which may be formed respecting him. Fables are related of this personage and his antagonists, which have given physical mythologists an opportunity of considering them as personifications of the elements of the world. The only means, however, by which an explanation of the subject can be afforded, are of a historical character. In order to convey any idea of this, we must state that the most conflicting opinions have been entertained respecting the person called Woden or Odin; and as it is impossible to reconcile what is said of him on any other

hypothesis, it has been supposed that four persons living in different ages have been called by this name.*

The first Odin is said to have been the eldest son of Bör, the second man, who is represented as having, with his two brothers, Vilé and Vé, defeated and slain the first giant Ymer. He is reported to have emigrated from the banks of the Tanais, and to have introduced into the North the worship of the sun. If we might venture to assign any definite meaning to a tradition so obscure, we should be disposed to think that it refers to a son of one of the earliest patriarchs, who emigrated from the Noachic family, and settled in the north of Europe.

The second of this name is said to have been the son of Hermodi, and to have come with the Aser from the borders of Europe and Asia, at the time when Darius Hystaspes invaded the Scythians. He brought with him the Runic alphabet, built temples, and established the mythology of the Edda. That the Goths, under the conduct of Woden or Odin, came from Scythia into the northern parts of Germany, is a received opinion among the writers of the North, and is confirmed by immemorial tradition, by all the chroniclers of those countries, and by many monuments and inscriptions in Runic characters, some of which are still to be seen in Sweden, Denmark, and the neighbouring islands.†

The third Odin was the son of Fridlef. He fled from the borders of the Caucasus at the time of Pompey's conquests, B.C. 50 or 60. Gathering his people together, he led them from the shores of the Euxine to the Baltic. There he found a country open to his efforts, being occupied by a scanty population. The inhabitants were greatly inferior in arts and arms to his warlike Scythians. The result of superior knowledge was soon exhibited; the fugitive became a conqueror. In a short period he subjugated the entire territory; and, distributing Norway, Denmark, Gothland, and Scania among his several sons, he settled at Upsala.

Beside these, we read of a fourth called the Saxon Odin,

* "Ancient Universal History," vol. xvii., p. 172, note E.

† *Ibid.*, p. 171.

who is supposed to have lived in the third or fourth century of the Christian era.

If the second of these persons first introduced civilization and religion into the northern parts of Europe, establishing a worship and a hierarchy, and teaching a language and letters before his time unknown; there can be little doubt but that the third of them, some ages afterward, adopted a similar line of policy, and used the means and materials which previously existed. By the vigorous exercise of superior energy and intellect, he moulded society into the forms which history presents to our view, and established the religion which those northern regions offer to our contemplation, and which the Saxons subsequently introduced into Britain. It may be necessary, therefore, to notice a few other circumstances concerning this extraordinary man.

He is celebrated in the countries which he subdued, not only as a great conqueror, but also as a poet, a sage, a priest, and a legislator. His powers of persuasion are said to have been as invincible as his sword; while he is supposed to have distinctly claimed a divine commission, and thus, to a certain extent, to have represented the Divine Being. When we have become better acquainted with the genius of the northern religion, we shall perceive how naturally this would follow. Having confirmed the supremacy of his religion and government throughout the North, he died; his children, who were numerous, ruling in the various provinces. His death was as remarkable as his life. Finding his end approaching, he inflicted nine wounds in a circle upon his body with the point of a lance, and made many other incisions in his skin with his sword. As he was dying, he declared that he was returning into Scythia, to take his seat among the other gods at an eternal banquet, where he would receive with great honours all who should expose themselves intrepidly in battle, and die bravely with their swords in their hands. As soon as he was dead, they carried his body to Sigtuna, where, conformably to a custom introduced by him into the North, it was burned with much pomp and magnificence.*

* MALLET'S "Northern Antiquities," vol. i., p. 60.

“In considering the career of this remarkable personage, the imagination naturally turns to the mysterious history of the first Peruvian Inca. But a still closer parallel is to be found between the Scythian Odin, and the Arabian Mahomed. Both were impostors upon a gigantic scale, and influenced the destinies of a large portion of the human race. Under their auspices, the tribes of the East and the North were brought together, and inspired for the momentous part they were in due season called upon to act in the drama of the world, when they came in their irresistible might to destroy. The philosophy of history scarcely presents a more interesting subject of conjecture, than the probable fate of the civilized world, had the two superstitions sent forth their myriads simultaneously. What would have been the issue to the human race, had they met upon the great battle-field of the Roman empire, to contend with equal valour and fanaticism, while the possession of the earth itself was the prize in question?”*

Having made these remarks concerning Odin, we proceed to give some information respecting those writings which communicate an account of the religious system which he established.

The ancient Scandinavians, like the earliest Britons, did not commit their tenets to writing; all their mythological and traditionary knowledge was handed down from mouth to mouth. They were, however, afterward recorded in Runic characters, which were esteemed sacred.

Great diversity of opinion has prevailed among the learned, as to the time when the Runic letters were introduced. Some contend that they were brought into the North at a very early period, and are even older than the Greek characters; others, amongst whom are Astle, Gibbon, and Fosbroke, consider them to be only an adaptation of the Roman alphabet, formed into straight lines for the easier engraving of them on hard substances. These conflicting views are resolved into the question, whether Runic characters were brought from the Caucasus, by the son of Fridlef,

* “Pictorial History of England,” vol. i., p. 225.

in the time of Pompey, or had they been known to the Scandinavians at a more remote era? Without pretending to decide this recondite point, we may be allowed to say, that we greatly doubt, whether all that has been stated by Celsus, supported as it is by the learned moderns whom we have named, is sufficient to destroy the claims of Runic letters to a very remote antiquity. If, however, they were only introduced about B.C. 60, they might now be found on very ancient monuments. The fact, however, is, that there are evidently three classes of these letters: 1. The Scandinavian; 2. The German; and, 3. The Anglo-Saxon. It is equally clear that the third class was derived from the second, as this was from the first; and as in early times Scandinavia was scarcely known to Greece and Rome, and as very slender memorials of its early history have been transmitted to our times, it is not possible to speak positively as to the period of the real origin of the Scandinavian characters.

The appearance of these Runes, or Runic letters, is remarkable. They are more like the Persepolitan inscriptions than any other. The term *Runes* is applied to magical inscriptions upon leaves, &c., of which there were some for all occasions; as, to avert shipwrecks, diseases, &c., or to inflict curses. Much importance was attached to their being written in a particular form, as serpentine, triangular, circular, &c. They are very seldom written from right to left, but often from top to bottom, in one continuous line like the Chinese language. On account of these letters being thus used for magical purposes, the Goths, after their conversion to Christianity, influenced by an indiscreet zeal, destroyed many ancient monuments, and burnt a great number of books, because of their being written in these characters. At length, in the year of our Lord 1001, the Runic letters were quite laid aside in Sweden, and the Roman alphabet was adopted in their stead; the Swedes having been persuaded to take this step by the pope, and by Sigfrid, a British bishop. In Spain these characters were forbidden by Alphonso, king of Castile and Navarre, A.D. 1136, and condemned by the council of Toledo, A.D. 1115.*

* "Ancient Universal History," vol. xvii., p. 171, *note*. FOSBROKE'S

The Scandinavians fully initiated the Saxons into the mysteries of their religion, which the latter retained and carried with them to their various settlements, until they were conquered by Charlemagne, and compelled to accept the Christian faith, or, at least, nominally to profess it, A.D. 785. When subjected to this persecution, the most earnest and devoted adherents of the old Pagan religion retired to Iceland, where the sacred books of the Scandinavians were preserved. From these, Samud Sigfudson, a clergyman, and Are Frode, the historian, between the years 1056 and 1133, collected the older EDDA. This important work was concealed and forgotten for nearly four hundred years. A fine copy was, however, discovered in the year 1643, and published, accompanied by a Latin translation, and a dictionary of northern mythology. The contents of the poems are prophecies, elevated conversations, and magic songs.

The new Edda, which was composed or arranged two hundred years later, is a systematical compendium of the former. It is in three parts; the first doctrinal, the second narrative, and the third critical.

Generally, the first is the most important: it is specially so for our purpose. It gives a lengthened conversation, which a Swedish king is supposed to have held in the court of the gods. The leading tenets of the ancient Gothic mythology are here delivered in detail. These, it must be observed, are not given as maintained by their philosophers, but (which makes an important distinction) as held by their *scalds*, or poets. We are in this work presented with a religious system, which must have been perpetually impressed upon the public mind by the adornments of imagination; being constantly incorporated in their songs and popular poetry; and which, therefore, must have constituted, in a greater degree than any other, the religion of the people.

Although the obvious design of the compiler, in the construction of the Edda, was to afford the young poets of Iceland a condensation of their ancient classics, sufficient to answer all the requirements of their profession; yet it evi-

"Encyclopædia of Antiquities," pp. 87, 88. ASTLE's "Origin and Progress of Writing," p. 88. Fol. London, 1803.

dently contains, especially in the part now under consideration, a system of mythology, more systematic, and possessing much more of epic unity, than anything furnished by the literature of Greece or Rome. The mythology of those countries divides itself into numerous branches, and loses itself in the ocean of real events. That of the Edda, on the contrary, exhibits one complete and entire system. The cosmology given is original, and the doctrines enunciated are prominent, important, and connected.

The second part of this work is not so applicable to our present purpose ; for, although it professes also to be a dialogue, carried on between other parties, it only gives a detail of different events which took place among the divinities, and contains no important addition to the information afforded in the first part, which has therefore been called, by way of eminence, **THE EDDA**.

The third part is still more unimportant, and will not require any further notice.

Beside the Edda, we have also extant some remains of a more ancient date, which are supposed to have formed a part of the older Edda. One of these is the **VOLUSPA**, or "The Oracle or Prophecy of Vola." It is attributed to the sibyl of the North, and contains a rapid sketch of the entire mythology of Scandinavia ; it has, therefore, been called the text, on which the Edda may be considered as the commentary. Another of the ancient fragments alluded to, is the **HAVAMAAL**, or "Sublime Discourse of Odin," which is attributed to that god himself, who is asserted to have given these precepts of wisdom to mankind. It is supposed to be the only piece in existence which exhibits, direct from the fountain-head, the morality of this ancient and interesting people. Some extracts from it will be given in a subsequent page.

There are other interesting documents of a less ancient date ; but it is principally from those which have been mentioned that we obtain any knowledge of the religion of the ancient Scandinavians, and consequently of the Anglo-Saxons, who subdued Britain.

We notice, in the next place, the principal doctrines of this religion.

In attempting this, it must be observed that we find a great and important difference between the religion of the earliest ages, and that which prevailed in later times. At first the system was extremely simple : it taught a few plain and easy doctrines, which bear a striking conformity to the primitive faith of all the other ancient nations. Like them, also, the Gothic tribes incorporated many additions and corruptions with their ancient faith ; although, from the influence of climate or other causes, the northern nations did not make those changes either to so great an extent, or so rapidly, as their southern neighbours.

Although the Scythians for a long time continued inviolably attached to their original faith, they at length suffered it to be corrupted by an intermixture of superstitions and ceremonies, some of them ridiculous, and others cruel ; in which, by little and little, they came to place the whole essence of religion,—a result not uncommon in its occurrence in the history of human nature.* It is not easy to mark the precise time at which this alteration took place, as well for want of ancient monuments, as because it was introduced by imperceptible degrees, and at various times, among the different tribes. But it is not on this account the less certain. We ought, therefore, to distinguish two separate epochs in the religion of this people ; and in each of these we must be careful to avail ourselves of all the aids afforded by the opinions of the sages, or by the mythology of the poets. We can, however, hope to notice only the most prominent points ; the finer links which connect the chain of evidence will generally escape us, being lost in the obscurity of those distant ages.

The views which the Scandinavians entertained of the Divine Being will illustrate the remarks which have just been made. In its ancient purity, their religion taught the being and government “of a supreme God, to whom all things were submissive and obedient.” The ancient Icelandic

* MALLEY'S “Northern Antiquities,” vol. i., chap. 5.

mythology calls Him "the Author of everything that existeth; the eternal, the ancient, the living and awful Being, the Searcher into concealed things, the Being that never changeth." It attributed to the Deity an infinite power, a boundless knowledge, an incorruptible justice. It forbade the people to represent this Divinity under any corporeal form, or even to think of confining Him within the enclosure of walls; but taught that it was only within woods or consecrated forests that they could properly serve Him.

From this supreme God they believed that there sprung an infinite number of inferior deities and genii, emanations of His Divinity, as it were, of which every part of the visible world was the seat and temple. These intelligences did not barely reside in the several parts of nature; they directed its operations; it was the organ or instrument of their love or liberality to mankind. Each element was under the guidance of some being peculiar to it. To these doctrines the Scythians adhered with great steadiness for many ages, and openly testified on several occasions their hatred and contempt for the polytheism of those nations which they had subdued, making it their first care to destroy all the objects of idolatrous worship in the places where they established their authority.

But with this people, as with other ancient nations, the progress of degeneracy continued. Having adopted the idea of genii, as already recorded, they came in process of time to associate several of them with the supreme God. This transition was easy. For, having previously supposed them to preside over everything within their respective spheres, a rude and simple people would naturally proceed to make this authority absolute. When this was accomplished, the Supreme Being was considered by the generality of the inhabitants as the God of war. We shall notice, in a subsequent page, the nature and character of the several divinities.

Another doctrine believed by the ancient Saxons, taught the existence and continued operation of a superintending providence. Hence the Edda says, "When Odin is seated

on his lofty throne, he thence discovers every country, he sees all the actions of men, and comprehends whatever he beholds."* This was carried to a great extent. All nature, every action of living beings, was regarded as open to the divine cognizance. The intervention of the Deity, even in the slightest things, was one of their most firmly-established doctrines. They also considered that every, even the most minute, appearance of nature was a manifestation of the will of Heaven to those who understood its language. Hence the involuntary motions of men, their dreams, their sudden and unforeseen inclinations, were considered as the salutary admonitions of Heaven, and were regarded with the most serious attention.†

Nor did their views terminate with a divine interposition. As we have already observed, they believed that all nature was influenced and operated on by Deity; and their polytheism appears to have been mainly an extravagant consequence drawn from their doctrine of providence.

The immortality of the soul, its capability of separate existence, and its consciousness, were also known and believed. There is a curious reference to this in their account of the creation of the first pair. "The sons of Bore, (the gods Odin, Vilé, and Vé,) as they were walking one day upon the shore, found two pieces of wood floating upon the waves. They took them, and made a man of the one, and a woman of the other. The first (Odin) gave life and soul; the second, (Vilé,) reason and motion; the third, (Vé,) hearing, sight, speech, garments, and a name. They called the man Aske, (Ash-Tree,) and the woman Elma (Elm). From these two are descended the human race."‡ We see that there is a distinct reference to the soul of man in this poetic tradition of the creation. This point is evidently taken from the Voluspa, which, on this subject, declares:—

"Odin gave them a *soul*. Hanie gave reason;
Lodur gave them blood, and a good complexion." §

* Edda, fab. v.

† Mallet's "Northern Antiquities," vol. i., p. 267. ‡ Edda, fab. v.

§ Turner's Translation of the Voluspa, in his "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. i., p. 242.

In proof that they fully apprehended the consequence of this spiritual nature, the Edda says, "He hath made man, and given him a spirit or soul, which shall live even after the body shall have mouldered away." * As this doctrine is involved in that of future rewards and punishments, respecting which the Scandinavian mythology gives the most explicit information, it will not be necessary to quote further respecting it.

On the subject of future retribution, we are brought again into contact with the two classes of doctrine to which we have previously alluded. Not only do we read of a place of happiness, and another of misery, prepared for the souls of mankind after death; but we find that this mythology speaks of *two* places of each kind. Valhalla, or "the palace of Odin," is the place which that god was believed to have prepared to receive the souls of all who should fall nobly in battle. This dogma seems to have originated with the Scythian invader of the North, and to have formed a principal feature in the martial religion which he introduced. At this palace, all who died in war, from the beginning to the end of the world, were received and entertained in the presence of the gods. The whole is strikingly characteristic of the habits and manners of the northern nations. The spirits of those heroes are feasted on the fat and flesh of a wild boar, which is served up every day, and which is said to surpass every other article of diet. This boar, although dressed every morning, becomes entire again every night, and thus serves for a daily repast. As to Odin himself, he stands in no need of food; wine is to him in the place of every other aliment. The heroes drink mead. "Can you imagine," asks the divine teacher in the Edda, "that the universal father would invite kings, and chiefs, and great lords, and give them nothing to drink but water? In that case, certainly, very many of those who arrive at the palace of Odin, and who had endured cruel torments, and received mortal wounds, in order to obtain access thither, would have reason to complain: this honour would, indeed, cost them dear,

* Edda, fab. i.

were they to meet with no better entertainment. But the case is quite otherwise ; for in Valhalla there is a she-goat which feeds on the leaves of the tree *herada*. From her paps flows hydromel, or mead, in such abundance, that it every day completely fills a pitcher large enough to inebriate all the heroes.’

The employment of these heroic spirits is in strict accordance with the sensuality of the preceding description. “Every day, as soon as they have dressed themselves, they take their arms, and, entering the lists, fight till they cut one another in pieces. This is their diversion ; but no sooner does the hour of repast arrive, than they remount their steeds, all safe and sound, and return to drink in the palace of Odin.” * In these feasts the heroes drink from the skulls of their enemies, while a crowd of virgins wait upon them, and fill their cups as fast as they empty them. Such were the future prospects which rendered the inhabitants of the north of Europe intrepid, and inspired them not only to defy, but even to seek with ardour, the most cruel deaths. Thus we find king Regner Lodbrog, in his last moments, far from uttering groans or forming complaints, expressing his joy in impassioned verse :—

“We fought with swords : I am still full of joy when I think that a banquet is preparing for me in the palace of the gods. Soon, soon, in the splendid abode of Odin, we shall drink beer out of the skulls of our enemies. A brave man shrinks not from death. I shall utter no words expressive of fear as I enter the hall of Odin.

“We fought with swords. Ah ! if my sons knew the sufferings of their father ; if they knew that poisonous adders tore his entrails to pieces ; with what ardour would they wish to wage cruel war ! For I gave a mother to my children, from whom they inherit a valiant heart.

“We fought with swords : but now I touch upon my last moments. A serpent already gnaws my heart. Soon shall my sons black their swords in the blood of Ella : their

* Edda, fab. xx.

rage is in a flame : those valiant youths will never rest till they have avenged their father.

“ We fought with swords, in fifty-and-one battles, under my floating banners. From my early youth I have learnt to dye the steel of my lance with blood ; and thought I could never meet with a king more valiant than myself. But it is time to cease : Odin hath sent his goddesses to conduct me to his palace. I am going to be placed on the highest seat, there to quaff goblets of beer with the gods. The hours of my life are rolled away. I will die laughing.”

This prince, after a long series of piratical incursions, was taken prisoner by Ella, in one of his attacks on the coast of England, and was cast into a dungeon which contained a great number of venomous serpents, and died a horrible death. The ode, which is acknowledged to be of very great antiquity, is said to have been composed by him during his last sufferings. It contains twenty-nine stanzas, of which those quoted are the conclusion. They all breathe the same spirit. It has been conjectured, that the prince himself did not compose the whole of this poem, and that the rest was added after his death by the Bard ; whose function it was, according to the custom of those times, to enhance the funeral splendour by singing verses in praise of the deceased. As the sons of Lodbrog, according to the prophetic language of the ode, soon revenged his death, this might have been the case ; but this supposition does not at all affect the truth of the vivid representation which the poem gives of the influence of those sentiments on the public mind.*

Here we see the doctrine clearly stated, and its effects upon the mind and character depicted to the life. Here we have a key to the intrepidity and daring of the ancient North-men. When a people, possessing great muscular strength, living in a bracing climate, and inured to constant and severe exercise, had their minds brought under such influence, and were taught to believe that future enjoyment

* MALLET'S "Northern Antiquities," vol. ii., pp. 170-175.

could be attained only by a violent death in warlike enterprise, we need not wonder at what they attempted, nor at what they achieved.

But although these views of a future state were prevalent and influential, we find in various parts of the Icelandic mythology glimmerings of a holier faith, intimations that there was an abode for happy spirits more pure and more permanent than the "hall of Odin." This place was called Gimle, that is, "covered with gold." There the just were to enjoy delights for ever. It is thus described in the Edda: "On the utmost limit of heaven towards the South, is the most beautiful city of all: it is called Gimle. It is more brilliant and shining than the sun itself, and will subsist even after the destruction of heaven and earth. Men of real goodness and integrity shall abide there for everlasting ages." The poem *Voluspa* thus speaks of it: "I know that there is a place brighter than the sun, and entirely covered with gold, in the city Gimle. There the virtuous are to reside; there they shall live happy throughout all ages." * This city is said to be inhabited at present "only by the luminous genii."

The primitive race of mankind undoubtedly were acquainted with the existence of good and bad angels. This knowledge, though corrupted and disfigured, is found to pervade every system of mythology which has obtained in the world. The scheme under consideration affords ample evidence of its existence, in the bright and black genii, of which so much has been written; although in the details it appears as if imagination had run mad, and lost itself in a labyrinth of confusion. The passage above quoted is worthy of notice, describing as it does the future and eternal abode of happy human spirits, now exclusively inhabited by luminous genii, or, as we should say, bright angels. "The opinion of the existence of these genii is more ancient than Plato, and it would be difficult to trace out its original. Perhaps it was taken from the same source whence the author of the Book of Enoch had taken what he relates of

* Edda, fab. ix.

the angels; that is, from the tradition, though corrupted and altered, of the rebellion of those angels." *

It was the same with respect to the future residence of unhappy spirits. Two places are described as being respectively opposed to the two heavens previously mentioned. Nifleheim † is the perfect contrast of Valhalla: it is the abode of Hela, or "Death," "who was cast into it. There she had the government of nine worlds given to her, into which she distributes those that are sent to her; that is, all who die of sickness or old age." Hence death in battle was not only sought as a means of obtaining access to the hall of Odin, but no less as the only way of avoiding future misery.

Here Hela reigned; and the description given of her residence is at once poetic and terrible: "Here she possesses vast apartments, strongly built, and fenced with large grates. Her hall is Grief; Famine is her table; Hunger, her knife; Delay, her valet; Slackness, her maid; Precipice, her gate; Faintness, her porch; Sickness and Pain, her bed; and her curtains, Cursing and Howling. The one half of her body is blue, the other half covered with skin, and of the colour of human flesh. She hath a dreadful, terrifying look, and by this alone it were easy to know her." ‡

* BANIER'S "Mythology," vol. i., p. 471.

† We have here one of the many striking instances wherein our Saxon ancestors, as a part of the northern family of nations, displayed their moral and social character in the words which they have chosen as names for things. We have seen that they alone, of all the ancient nations, recognised the true character and proper position of the female sex. Woman with them was not the slave, but the partner, the companion of man, admitted to an equality of rights, civil and religious. We find, also, (without question, in a great measure, the consequence of this,) that their women were very remarkable for chastity. They were therefore in possession of two of the main elements of domestic enjoyment. Hence, the term above, *Nifleheim*, literally "evil-home," is the name given to hell; while *Gladheim*, "glad-home," is one of the names which they applied to heaven; as if an unhappy home gave them the strongest idea of perfect misery, and thus furnished an appellation for hell; and, on the contrary, a happy home afforded the brightest picture of happiness, and therefore suggested a name for the residence of the gods.

‡ Edda, fab. xvi.

As a proof of the early prevalence of these doctrines, it will be sufficient to quote Valerius Maximus, who flourished very early in the first century of the Christian era. He says of this people: "Their philosophy is gay and courageous. They leap for joy in a battle, that they are going to quit life in so glorious a manner. In sickness they lament for fear of a shameful and miserable end." Lucan, also, who wrote A.D. 50, writes to the same effect: "Happy in their mistake are the people who live beneath the pole! Persuaded that death is only a passage to a long life, they are undisturbed by the most grievous of all fears, that of dying. Hence they eagerly run to arms, and their minds are capable of meeting death: hence they esteem it cowardice to spare a life which they shall so soon recover." * The history of ancient Scandinavia is full of passages expressive of this manner of thinking; and, in consequence of the influence of these views, suicide gained an awful ascendancy.

The other place of punishment was called Nastrande, and was to endure for ever. It is thus described: "In Nastrande" (that is, "the shore of the dead") "there is a vast and direful structure, the portal of which faces the north. It is compiled of nothing but the carcasses of serpents, all whose heads are turned towards the inside of the building, where they vomit forth so much venom, that it forms a long river of poison. In this, float the perjured and the murderers; as is said in those verses of the Voluspa: 'I know that there is in Nastrande an abode remote from the sun, the gates of which look toward the north. There drops of poison rain through the windows. It is all built of the carcasses of serpents. There, in rapid rivers, swim the perjured, the assassins, and those who seek to seduce the wives of others.' In another place, their condition is still worse; for a wolf, an all-devouring monster, 'perpetually torments the bodies which are sent in thither.' "†

* MALLETT'S "Northern Antiquities," pp. 176, 177.

† Edda, fab. xxiii. This description, which the Scandinavian mythology has given of hell, is remarkable for exact accordance with that which Hyde adduces as found in the religion of the ancient Persians: "Hell," say they, "is on the shore of a fetid, stinking river, whose waters are as black as pitch, and cold as ice; in these float the souls of the damned. The smoke

In proceeding to notice the deities which this religion taught our ancestors to worship, it is necessary that we should observe the great beauty and appropriateness of the name which was given to the Supreme Being, and which has no equal, except in the pages of inspiration. The Saxons called Him GOD, which is literally, "THE GOOD;" the same word signifying both the Deity and His most endearing quality.

We have already seen, that he who had been previously worshipped as supreme, was considered as the god of war, after the northern nations had adopted a plurality of gods. He was called Woden or Odin, a term which literally means, "the furious one."* His worship was common to all the northern nations, though subject to slight alterations in the name. For while it is said of this deity, "that he lives for ever; that he governs all his kingdom, and directs the great things as well as the small; that he hath formed the heaven, the earth, and the air; that he hath made man, and hath given him a spirit or soul, which shall live even after the body shall have mouldered away;" and that "although the gods are powerful, yet they serve him as children do a father;" he is, nevertheless, called "'The Father of Battles,' because he adopts for his children all those who are slain with swords in their hands. He assigns them for their place of residence the palaces of Valhall and Vingolf, and bestows upon them the title of heroes."† He is therefore called, "The terrible and severe god, that carrieth desolation and fire; the active and roaring deity, he who giveth victory, and reviveth courage in the conflict; who nameth those that are to be slain." The warriors who went to battle were accustomed to vow to send him a certain number of souls which they consecrated to him. These souls were Odin's right; he received them at Valhall, ascends in vast rolls from this dark gulf; and the inside of it is full of scorpions and serpents." An equally striking accordance will be discovered with respect to some other points. See MALLETT'S "Northern Antiquities," vol. ii., p. 133.

* PALGRAVE'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," p. 53.

† Edda, fab. i., p. 10.

his ordinary place of residence, where he rewarded such as died sword in hand.* The assistance of this deity was implored in every war that was undertaken; to him the vows of both parties were addressed; and it was believed that he often descended to intermix in the conflict himself, to inflame the fury of the combatants, to strike those who were to perish, and to carry their souls to his celestial abodes.

In addition to what has been said respecting the high and general estimation in which this deity was held, it may be observed that the same word which was used as the name for an "idol" in the Saxon language, also signified "war;" thus apparently identifying the practice of war with the character of their god. This name has been immortalized in our country, by being appropriated to the fourth day of the week, which from him was called "Woden's-day," or "Wednesday."

It is not so easy to speak of the other Saxon deities. The several nations into which the North-men were ultimately divided either adopted different deities after their separation, or, which is perhaps most probable, gave the same deities different names. The Icelandic mythology furnishes us with the names of many gods and goddesses. Besides Odin, we have Thor, his son, who was charged with the conduct of the atmosphere, and presided over winds and tempests; Mord, who reigned over the sea; Balder, invested with wisdom and eloquence; Brage, who presided over poetry; Heimdal, the porter who guarded the bridge which led from earth to heaven; and Frey, Tyr, Hoder, Vile, Uller, and Forsette.

We have also the names of an equal number of goddesses. The principal of these is Frigga, or Freya, the wife of Odin. Under this name the earth is supposed to have been represented, since all the Gothic nations, as well as the first inhabitants of Greece, and the ancient Syrians, were of opinion that the Supreme Being, or celestial God, had united with the earth to produce the inferior divinities, man, and all

* TURNER'S "Anglo-Saxons," vol. i., p. 216, *note*.

other creatures. They called her "Mother Earth," and "Mother of the Gods." The Phenicians adored these two principles under the names of Teutates and Astarte ; and all antiquity is full of traces of their worship. Tacitus attributes the same practice to the Germans. He says, "They adore the goddess Herthus," meaning "the Earth ;" and we cannot doubt that the same goddess was the Frigga or Frea of the Scandinavians.

When the son of Fridlef came into Denmark, and had found the worship of Odin and his wife, the Earth, established there, no doubt can be entertained that the same people who gave him the name of Odin or God, gave his wife also the name of Frea, "consecrated to the earth." It is evident that the same motive which led him—the third Odin—to aspire to one title would equally prompt him to have his wife invested with the other. Thus the same confusion which prevails in the description given of Odin equally obtains in that given of his wife. This Frea became in the sequel the Venus of the North, doubtless because she passed for the principle of all fecundity, and for the mother of all existence. It appears, therefore, probable that this goddess came also to be called Eostre, a very slight alteration from the Astarte of the Phenicians.*

It will not be necessary for us to give the names of other female divinities which this mythology furnishes. It would be more interesting to state explicitly, which of these gods were worshipped by the Saxons after their settlement in this island ; but this is difficult. Woden or Odin, it is evident, was the predominant idol of their adoration. Frigga and Thor were also worshipped by the Anglo-Saxons. These three, according to the Edda, made up the great council of the gods ; and were the principal objects of worship in all the branches of the Scandinavian nation.

As Thor was greatly revered in Britain, it will be fitting to offer some further information respecting him. He is said to be "the most illustrious amongst the gods. He is called Asa-Thor, or the Lord Thor. He is the bravest of

* MALLET'S "Northern Antiquities," vol. i., p. 79.

gods and men.”* He was master of two very precious things. The first was “a mace or club, which, as often as he discharged it, returned again to his hand of itself. He grasped it with gauntlets of iron. He was further possessed of a girdle, which had the virtue to renew his strength, as often as it was needful. It was with these formidable arms that he overthrew to the ground the monsters and giants, when the gods sent him to oppose their enemies.”†

But, what is more remarkable, Thor is not only considered as a defender and avenger of the gods in their conflicts with the giants and other evil powers; he is also called “the Eldest of Sons,” as being the first and principal intelligence proceeding from the union of Deity with matter. He was therefore constituted “a middle divinity, a mediator between God and man.” It is very probable that many people venerated him as the intelligence who animated the sun and fire. The former notion bears so striking an analogy to the great doctrine of the New Testament, that we should strongly suspect it had been borrowed from it in a very early period of the Christian era, if the religion of the ancient Persians (to which the latter opinion has been already shown to bear some resemblance) had not inculcated a doctrine precisely similar.

This people, who pretended that their faith had been reformed and improved under the direction of the patriarch Abraham, are said to have believed, that Mythra, who was also regarded as the sun, was a mediator between Ormuzd and his creatures. He is occupied, according to M. Du Perron, who has examined the subject at large, “in continually opposing the powers of evil; for which purpose he has one thousand ears and ten thousand eyes, and flies between heaven and earth armed with a massy club. He is the source of light, provides the sun for the use of the earth, watches over the law, defends the soul after death from the touch of impure spirits, and is a mediator between Ormuzd and his creatures.”‡

* Edda, fab. xi.

† Mallet’s “Northern Antiquities,” vol. i., p. 82.

‡ “History of Persia,” in the Edinburgh Cabinet Library, p. 156.

“The worship of the Persians had, in this respect, as in a great many others, the most exact resemblance to that of this people [the Scandinavians]. The Persians held that the most illustrious of all created intelligences was what they paid homage to under the symbol of fire or the sun, wherein the intelligence resided. They called it Mithr-as, or ‘the mediator lord,’ the word *as* still signifying ‘lord’ in Persian. They, as the Scandinavians, kept a perpetual and sacred fire, in consequence of this persuasion. The Scythians, according to Herodotus and Hesychius, adored this divinity under the title of Goeto-syrus, or ‘the good star.’ This word *syr* or *seir*, which the Persians employed to denominate ‘the sun,’ seems to be the same with *Thor*, only in a different dialect. The ancient people of the North pronounced the *th* in the same manner as the English do at present, not very different from *ss*. They had a particular character for that letter, which was afterwards lost in the other dialects of the Saxon language. All the Celtic nations in like manner had been accustomed to the worship of the sun, either as distinguished from Thor or considered as his symbol. It was a custom that every where prevailed in ancient times, to celebrate a feast at the winter solstice, by which men testified their joy at seeing this great luminary return again to this part of the heavens. They sacrificed horses to him, ‘as an emblem,’ says Herodotus, ‘of the rapidity of this planet.’ This was the greatest solemnity in the year. They called it in many places Yole or Yuule, from the word *Hiaul* or *Houl*, which even at this day signifies ‘the sun’ in the languages of Cornwall and Bas Bretagne. When the ancient Pagan religion gave place to the Christian, the rejoicings, feasts, and nocturnal assemblies, which that festival authorized, indecent as they were, were not suppressed, lest, by endeavouring to gain all, all should be lost. The church was content to sanctify the end of feasting, by applying it to the nativity of our Lord; the anniversary of which happened to be about the same time. In the languages of the North, Juul or Yule still signifies ‘Christmas;’ and the manner in which this festival is celebrated in many places, as well as the old name

itself, reminds us of many circumstances of its first original. In all the languages of the North, the day consecrated to the *Jupiter tonans* of the Romans, was transferred to the god Taor, and was named Thorsdag, or Thursday."*

An additional proof that the ancient religion of the North contained some elements of Sabianism, intermixed with hero-worship, is found in the fact, that the first two days of the week derived their names from the sun and moon. The origin of the names given to all the days of the week may here be stated: Sunday, or the Sun's day; Monday, or the Moon's day; Tuesday, or Tieu's-day; Wednesday, or Woden's-day; Thursday, or Thor's-day; Friday, or Freya-day; Saturday, or Sæter-day.

On these it may be observed, that, contrary to all our notions, and to the mythology of the Greeks and Romans, the sun was considered a female deity, and the moon as a male deity. Respecting Tuesday there is some uncertainty; whether it derived its name from the Tuisco mentioned as a deity by Tacitus; or from Tyr, who is celebrated in the Edda as one of the companions of Odin. Wednesday evidently obtained its designation from Woden or Odin; and Thursday from Thor. Frigga or Freya, the wife of Odin, gave her name to Friday. All that is known respecting Sæter, from whom Saturday acquired its appellation, is, that he was considered as a water deity.

Like the Persian, the northern mythology also exhibited a personification of the evil principle. To this the Edda gives the name of Loke, and calls him "the calumniator of the gods, the artificer of fraud, the disgrace of gods and men." He is described as handsome in his person, and very well made; but his soul is evil, light, and inconstant. He surpasses all beings in that science which is called cunning and perfidy. By a giantess, who was called "the Messenger of Ill," he had three children: one is the wolf Fenris; the second is the Great Serpent; and the third is Hela, or "Death."

The gods are said to have been informed by oracles, of the

* MALLEY'S "Northern Antiquities," vol. ii., pp. 41, 42.

evils to which they and the universe at large were exposed from these diabolical beings, and to have availed themselves of every means in their power to avert these dangers. Loke was imprisoned in a cavern, with a serpent suspended over his head, whose venom fell drop by drop upon his face. The wolf Fenris was at first brought up with the gods, but was afterward chained by a magical cord, and thus confined. The Great Serpent is represented to have been cast into the deep, where it is grown so large that it encompasses the whole world; while Hela, or "Death," is appointed the keeper of Nifleheim, or "hell."

Our information respecting the religious institutions, rites, sacrifices, and ceremonies of this people, is very meagre and unsatisfactory. At first they worshipped (as all other nations in primitive times appear to have done) in the open air, on a hill, or under a large tree. In later ages temples were built, some of which were of a very gorgeous character; but these were erected long subsequent to the period which we are now reviewing. Yet it is evident that the Anglo-Saxons had temples, and that many were erected in England soon after their establishment in this island. Notwithstanding that their warlike habits arose so evidently out of their religious system, we are also informed, that their temples were considered desecrated and profaned, if any warlike weapons were brought into them.* The same authority states that they had idols in their temples; but of their names or figures we are very imperfectly informed. It is said, however, that Odin was represented by a gigantic image, armed and crowned, and bearing a naked sword. Thor was portrayed wearing a crown of stars, and wielding his terrible mace; and the other deities according to their respective attributes.

It is certain that priests were duly appointed among the Anglo-Saxons. These were regularly organized. One was

* *BEDÆ Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. ii., cap. 13. It is remarkable that the place where the circumstance spoken of by Bede took place is still called Godmanham, that is, "a receptacle for gods;" and near it is Wigton, which denotes, "a place for idols." See Notes on Bede in LUMLEY'S Translation.

appointed over the others, who was regarded as the chief. Women were admitted into this order, and, as priestesses, exercised great influence. Each of the three superior divinities had separate priests to preside over its worship, who had unlimited authority with regard to the sacrifices, and every thing which seemed to have connexion with religion. The respect shown to them was equal to their authority. It is worthy of remark, that they were generally descended from one family, as were the Jewish priests; and they persuaded the people that this family had God Himself for its founder. The sovereignty and the priesthood were frequently united in the same person. There can be no doubt that the example of Odin encouraged this. If we may presume to assert any thing with regard to a subject so clouded with uncertainty, this warrior in all probability acted also as a priest. By associating the name of his deity with his own, and by the exercise of his great energy and successful military prowess, he was regarded at length as a divine person. In consequence of this, his successors, eager to grasp as large a measure of this influence as possible, performed the functions of the priesthood. The goddess Frigga was usually served by king's daughters, who pronounced oracles, devoted themselves to perpetual virginity, and never suffered the fire in her temple to expire.

When the power of the priesthood is considered, as it existed among the northern nations, we need not be surprised at the reverence paid to them. Tacitus informs us, that among the Germans the power of inflicting pains and penalties, of striking and binding a criminal, was vested in the priests alone; and that the men who on other occasions manifested the most fiery spirit, would tamely submit to blows, or even death itself, from the hand of the pontiff, whom they considered to be the instrument of an angry deity. "In short, the credulity of the people, and the craft and presumption of the priests, went so far, that these pretended interpreters of the divine will dared even to demand, in the name of heaven, the blood of kings themselves; and they obtained it. To succeed in this, it was

only necessary for them to avail themselves of those times of special calamity, when the people, distracted with sorrow and fear, laid their minds open to the most horrid impressions. At such times, while the prince was slaughtered at one of the altars of the gods, the others were covered with offerings, which were heaped up on all sides, for their ministers."*

The sacrifices which were presented to the gods in the early ages were very simple, and such as a people in the first stages of civilization would offer,—the first-fruits of their crops, and the choicest products of the earth. They also sacrificed animals. They offered to Thor, during the feast of Jaul, fat oxen and horses; to Frigga, the largest hog which they could procure; to Odin, horses, dogs, and falcons, sometimes cocks, and a fat bull. They even proceeded at times to shed human blood. The victims were usually chosen from captives in time of war, and slaves during peace. After being selected, they were treated with excessive kindness, until the time of their execution, when they were congratulated on their happy destiny in a future life. On great emergencies, however, nobles and kings were immolated on the altars of the gods. On all these occasions the priests took care, in consecrating the victim, to pronounce certain words: such as, "I devote thee to Odin;" "I send thee to Odin;" or, "I devote thee for a good harvest, for the return of a fruitful season." The ceremony concluded with feasting, during which they drank immoderately. First, the kings and chief lords drank healths in honour of the gods; afterward, every one drank, making some vow or prayer to the god whom they named.† After the creature was slain, the body was burnt or suspended in a sacred grove near the temple; part of the blood was sprinkled upon the people, part upon the sacred grove.

* MALLET'S "Northern Antiquities," vol. i., p. 121.

† Hence arose that custom, among the first Christians of Germany and the North, of drinking to the health of our Saviour, the apostles, and the saints; a custom which the church at first barely tolerated, and which led to much licentiousness and scandal.—MALLET'S "Northern Antiquities," vol. i., p. 116.

With the same they also bedewed the images of the gods, the altars, the benches and walls of the temple, both within and without.*

Augury and magic entered largely into this, and almost every other, part of the religious system of the Scandinavians. The priests paid the greatest attention to the state in which the victim was found immediately after death, in order thereby to ascertain the will of the gods. From the manner in which the blood flowed, or the victim fell, the condition of the entrails, or the state of the heart, they pretended to read their future prospects, and to discover whether good or ill fortune awaited them. The same superstition reigned not only on special occasions, but throughout their moral system. The direction of the wind, the aspect of the sky, the flight or voice of birds, were all heavenly indications, and betokened success or adversity. The smith, while hammering the iron into a breastplate, chanted a song, by the instrumentality of which the breastplate became proof against all weapons of attack; and when forging a sword, he had an equally efficacious charm, which gave it an edge that nothing could resist. It is, indeed, scarcely credible to what an extent this slavish superstition prevailed. If the omens of success were prominent, no difficulty was regarded, no peril considered; but the man who, in other circumstances, would brave any danger, and eagerly rush into conflict with any foe, would turn pale at the untoward chattering of a bird, or tremble at an adverse fold in the entrails of a dead animal.

Some verses are yet extant which are attributed to the founder of this faith, and called "The Runic Chapter, or the Magic of Odin." A short extract is here given, to show how far the pretensions of the priests extended:—

"I know a song, by which I soften and enchant the arms of my enemies, and render their weapons of none effect.

"I know a song, which I need only to sing when men have loaded me with bonds; for the moment I sing it, my chains fall to pieces, and I walk forth at liberty.

* Compare Exod. xxiv. 6–8.

“I know a song, useful to all mankind ; for as soon as hatred inflames the sons of men, the moment I sing it, they are appeased.

“I know a song, of such virtue, that, were I caught in a storm, I can hush the winds, and render the air perfectly calm.”

In the investigation of any religious system, it must be interesting to ascertain the character of its morals, and the extent to which this morality was inculcated and enforced. In the case under consideration, it cannot but have been observed that valour takes the place of purity ; and that, notwithstanding some occasional references of a different tendency, the great scope and design of the system, as far as it can be ascertained from the character of its divinities, the promises it affords of future reward, the threatenings it holds out of punishment hereafter, or even the sacrifices it prescribes, does not embrace any elevated standard of morals, but rather inculcates violence and sensuality, and exhibits martial bravery as the greatest excellence of the human character.

It must not, however, be supposed that this people were quite destitute of sound moral principles. On the contrary, some of their oldest writings are remarkable for the wisdom and purity which they teach. Here we are again brought into contact with the distinction which has been frequently referred to, as existing between the doctrines of this religion in the early and in the later ages, and which, especially with regard to the point immediately under revision, is worthy of particular notice. “In other creeds,” says an able writer on this subject, “a complete amalgamation has been accomplished between the first principles of pure religion and the adventitious corruptions of succeeding periods, because in these the progress from primeval truth to error has been the gradual work of ages. In that case, though a few of those original principles are suffered to remain, which form the common basis of every system of religious belief, yet the fables that gather upon them become gradually so identified with the whole, that they can scarcely be recognised or separated from the general mass. But in

the system of Odin there is nothing of this complete intermixture and amalgamation. Here there is only one system superinduced upon another, while each remains separate and distinct. The coming of the ferocious and popular creed from Scythia resembled the sudden rush of a lava torrent, rather than the gradual concretion of a fresh soil; and, under its hard and gloomy surface, we can discover the layer of earth still unmixed, that, before the inundation, was the source of beauty and sustenance. The son of Fridulph, though he found in his new home a people far inferior to his own, yet found them possessed of a higher system of religion than was known to his more accomplished countrymen; and some of its principles he adopted, while the rest he tacitly sanctioned, or left undisturbed in the propagation of his new creed. It is thus, perhaps, that we are to account for the discourse ascribed to him called the *Havamaal*; containing a morality not only superior to his general precepts, but at variance with their tenor."

"This ancient piece, which purports to give the moral principles of the earliest Scandinavians, contains about one hundred and twenty stanzas, most of which are good and sensible. From these a selection only is here placed before our readers, for the purpose of conveying some idea of their general character. It must be remembered that they belong to a very ancient period: it is not remarkable, therefore, if allusions are found to customs and practices, which in the present state of society are not immediately recognised: it is, however, believed that few such difficulties will occur."*

* "The *Havamaal*, or 'Sublime Discourse of Odin,' is attributed to that god himself, who is supposed to have given these precepts of wisdom to mankind. This piece is the only one of the kind now in the world. We have, directly from the *ancient* Scythians themselves, no other monument on the subject of their morality: whatever we know from any other quarter on this article, being imperfect, corrupted, and uncertain. Thus this moral system of Odin may, in some measure, supply the loss of the maxims which Zamolxis, Dicaenæus, and Anacharsis, gave to their Scythian countrymen; maxims which those sages pretended to have derived from heaven, and which were frequently the envy of the Greek philosophers."—MALLET'S "Northern Antiquities," vol. ii., p. 154.

“He who travelleth hath need of wisdom. One may do at home whatsoever one will; but he who is ignorant of good manners, will only draw contempt upon himself, when he comes to sit down with men well instructed.

“Happy he who draws upon himself the applause and benevolence of men: for whatever depends on the will of others is hazardous and uncertain.

“There is nothing more useless to the sons of the age, than to drink too much ale: the more the drunkard swallows, the less is his wisdom, till he loses his reason. The bird of oblivion sings before those who inebriate themselves, and steals away their souls.

“The gluttonous man, if he is not upon his guard, eats his own death; and the gluttony of a fool makes a wise man laugh.

“The lewd and dissolute man makes a mock of every thing, not considering how much he himself is the object of derision. No one ought to laugh at another, until he is free from faults himself.

“Many are thought to be knit in the ties of sincere kindness; but when it comes to the proof, how much are they deceived! Slander is the common vice of the age. Even the host backbites his guest.

“One’s own home is the best home, though it be never so small. Every thing one eats at home is sweet. He who lives at another man’s table is often obliged to wrong his palate.

“Love both your friends and your friends’ friends: but do not favour the friend of your enemies.

“Rise early, if you would enrich yourself, or vanquish an enemy. The sleeping wolf gains not the prey, neither the drowsy man the victory.

“Whilst we live, let us live well: for, be a man never so rich when he lights his fire, Death may perhaps enter before it is burnt out.

“It is better to have a son late than never. One seldom sees sepulchral stones raised over the graves of the dead by any other hands than those of their own offspring.

“ Riches pass away like the twinkling of an eye : of all friends they are the most inconstant. Flocks perish ; relations die ; friends are not immortal ; you will die yourself : but I know one thing alone that is out of the reach of fate, that is, the judgment which is passed upon the dead.

“ Let not the wisest be imperious, but modest ; for he will find by experience, that when he is among those that are powerful, he is not the most mighty.

“ Praise the fineness of the day, when it is ended ; praise a woman, when you have known her ; a sword, when you have proved it ; a maiden, after she is married ; the ice, when once you have crossed it ; and the liquor, after it is drunk.

“ There is no malady or sickness more severe, than not to be content with one’s lot.

“ The heart alone knows what passes within the heart ; and that which betrays the soul is the soul itself.

“ Be humane and gentle to those you meet travelling on the mountains, or on the sea.

“ Be not the first to break with your friend. Sorrow gnaws the heart of him who hath no one to advise with but himself.

“ Have never three words of dispute with the wicked. The good will often yield up a point, when the wicked is enraged and swollen with pride.

“ Do not accustom yourself to mocking ; neither laugh at your guest, nor a stranger : they who remain at home often know not who the stranger is that cometh to their gate.

“ Where is there to be found a virtuous man without some failing ? or one so wicked as to have no good quality ?

“ Laugh not at thy aged grandsire, nor at the grey-headed declaimer. There often come forth from the wrinkles of the skin words full of wisdom.” *

However perverted the morals of this people might have become, under the influence of the sanguinary principles and practices which had been introduced among them, these

* MALLET’S “ Northern Antiquities,” vol. ii., p. 161. .

maxims will show, that they nevertheless possessed important lessons of wisdom and truth in the remains of a preceding age. A circumstance in itself remarkable, and calculated to cast light on this branch of the subject, is found in the fact, that the term "man," which they used as we do, to designate a human being, also signified "wickedness," showing that they were well aware that our fallen nature had become identified with moral impurity.*

It will now be necessary to allude to the information that this system professed to give respecting those topics which, although not immediately religious, are evidently beyond the reach of the human intellect, even in its most profound and laborious researches, and which, in almost every religious system, have been the subjects of some real or pretended revelations. It is evident that it pleased Almighty God to communicate to the first generations of mankind much information respecting their own origin and that of the universe, and with regard to the destiny to which all created things would finally be subject. There can be no doubt that the knowledge of this having been done, remained after the particulars of the information had been to a great extent obliterated from the mind. Hence the various nations, after the dispersion at Babel, gathered up the traditions that were remembered on these subjects, and, associating them with the creations of poetic fancy, formed them into a system, or branch of a system, and revered it as religious truth.

This was evidently the case with the ancient inhabitants of Scandinavia. Early traditions and prophecies, obscured and corrupted by the wildest workings of a distempered imagination, are presented to our view; and even in this form they possess great interest. For although rather harsher in their tone, they are certainly on the whole superior to all that is given on this subject in the poetry of Greece and Rome.

Respecting the creation, the teaching of the Scandinavians is curious. They begin by giving a description of chaos: "In the day-spring of the ages there was neither sea, nor

* PALGRAVE'S "History of England," vol. i., p. 54.

shore, nor refreshing breezes. There was neither earth below, nor heaven above, to be distinguished. The whole was only one vast abyss, without herb and without seeds. The sun had then no palace, the stars knew not their dwelling-places, the moon was ignorant of her powers. After this there was a luminous, burning, flaming world toward the South; and from this world flowed out incessantly into the abyss that lay toward the North, torrents of sparkling fire, which, in proportion as they removed far away from their source, congealed in their falling into the abyss, and so filled it up with scum and ice. Thus was the abyss by little and little filled quite full; but there remained within it a light and immovable air, and thence exhaled icy vapours. Then a warm breath, coming from the south, melted those vapours, and formed of them living drops, whence was born the giant YMER." Although this is described as the result of natural causes, it is, by the Edda, attributed to the influence of the supreme God, all being accomplished "by the power of Him who governed."

The account proceeds: "It is reported, that whilst he" (Ymer) "slept, an extraordinary sweat under his arm-pits produced a male and female; whence is sprung the race of the giants, a race evil and corrupt, as well as Ymer their author. Another race was brought forth, which formed alliances with that of the giant Ymer. This was called the family of Bor, so named from the first of that family, who was the father of Odin. The sons of Bor slew the giant Ymer, and the blood ran from his wounds in such abundance, that it caused a general inundation, wherein perished all the giants, except only one. He is called Bergelmer. He *escaped with all his family by happening to be on board his bark.*" This tradition, the Edda states, was perpetuated and confirmed by ancient verses, which it quotes: "Many winters before the earth was fashioned was Bergelmer born; and well I know that this sage giant was saved and preserved on board his bark."

Then a new world was formed. The sons of Bor, or the gods, dragged the body of the giant Ymer into the middle of

the abyss, and of it made the earth : the sea and rivers were composed of his blood ; the earth, of his flesh ; the great mountains, of his bones ; the rocks, of his teeth, and of the splinters of his broken bones. They made of his skull the vault of heaven, which they divided into four quarters, and placed a dwarf at each corner to sustain it. These dwarfs are called " East, West, North, and South." After this, they went and seized upon fires in Muspelsheim,* (that flaming world in the South,) and placed them in the abyss, in the upper and lower parts of the sky, to enlighten the earth, From these the days were distinguished, and the years reduced to calculation. They also assigned to other fires certain spaces which they were to run through, some of them in heaven, others under the heaven. They made the earth round, and surrounded it with the deep ocean, upon the banks of which they placed the giants.

One day, as the sons of Bor, or the gods, were taking a walk, they found two pieces of wood floating upon the water. These they took, and out of them made a man and a woman. From these descended the race of men who are permitted to inhabit the earth.

It is easy to trace in this narration vestiges of an ancient and general tradition, many circumstances of which every sect of Paganism has altered, adorned, or suppressed, according to their own fancy, and which is still to be found entire and uncorrupted only in the books of Moses. If the parti-

* *Muspels-heim* signifies " the abode or residence of Muspel ; " but we are left in entire ignorance of the being so designated. The ancient sages of the North were desirous to explain the manner in which the world had been framed, and to advance something probable for its being so cold towards the North, and warm towards the South. They were evidently so ignorant of the far South, as to believe that this latter circumstance was a rule without an exception. For the purpose of solving this difficulty, they placed toward the South a huge mass of fire, which they supposed had been there for ever, and had served as the residence of the wicked genii. This was the matter of which the sun was made. This ether, or fire, so placed at one extremity of the world, enabled them also to assign a plausible reason for the final conflagration of the universe ; for they were fully persuaded that it would at the last day be consumed by fire. See Notes on the Edda, fab. ii.

culars now stated are fairly considered, they will be found as near the scriptural and only true account, as those supplied by the early annals or poetry of any other Heathen nation. Compare them with the Theogony of Hesiod, the Histories of Sanchoniatho and Berosus, or the poetry of Ovid; and the Scandinavian records will be found to contain as much truth, mixed with as little error, as any of them.

The preceding extracts will have shown that the antediluvian history is believed to relate entirely to the giants: the creation of the present race of mankind is supposed to have taken place subsequently to the flood. It will also have been observed that great efforts are made to account for all the phenomena of nature by fictions. Notwithstanding this, it must be admitted, that the leading events of the early history of the world are here brought under our notice. The fact of the creation of the world by divine power is asserted; while the vivifying breath which produces the giant Ymer; the sleep, during which a male and female spring from his sides; the deluge which destroys all the inhabitants of the world, except one family; the escape of this sage person with his household in a floating vessel; the renewal of the world which succeeds:—all these appear to be the leading points of authentic history, preserved by tradition, and but thinly covered with fable and allegory.

It is here that the revelations of Paganism generally terminate; but at this point the northern mythology only finds a resting-place for a moment. A fresh flight is commenced; and a new revelation, more mysterious and more august than the former, is unfolded. After ages have revolved, and when time has arrived at its close, terrible signs in heaven and earth are to announce the coming dissolution; while the human race, unsuspecting of the danger, shall be involved in universal depravity. And then comes the end. The malignant powers, so long restrained, are to burst from their enthrallment; the gods are to perish beneath their fierce assault, or in despair and by mutual wounds; even Odin himself expires, while a conflagration bursts forth, in which Valhalla, and the world, and the place of penal

anguish, with all their divine and human inhabitants, are to be utterly consumed. But from this second chaos a new world is to emerge in its youthful grandeur, with a heaven more glorious than Valhalla, and a hell more fearful than Nifleheim ; while over all a God appears, pre-eminent and alone, possessed of greater might and nobler attributes than Odin. Then, too, the human race are finally to be tried ; when higher virtues than bravery, and heavier guilt than cowardice, are to form the standard of good and evil. The righteous shall then be received into Gimle, while the bad shall be doomed to the unutterable punishments of Nas-trande ; and either state shall continue through eternity, under the reign of Him who is eternal.*

We give some brief extracts, in which the principal points referred to in the preceding summary are communicated : “In the first place will come the grand, ‘the desolating’ winter, during which the snow will fall from the four corners of the world, the frost will be very severe, the tempest violent and dangerous, and the sun will withdraw his beams. Three such winters shall pass away, without being softened by one summer. Three others shall follow, during which, war and discord will spread through the whole globe. Brothers, out of hatred, shall kill each other ; no one shall spare either his parent, or his child, or his relations. See how it is described in the Voluspa : ‘ Brothers, becoming murderers, shall stain themselves with brothers’ blood ; kindred shall forget the ties of consanguinity ; life shall become a burden ; adultery shall reign throughout the world. A barbarous age ! an age of swords ! an age of tempests ! an age of wolves ! The bucklers shall be broken in pieces ; and these calamities shall succeed each other, till the world shall fall to ruin.’ Then will happen such things as may well be called prodigies. The wolf Fenris breaks his chain, and, opening his enormous mouth, which reaches from heaven to earth, devours the sun ; a severe loss will it be found to mankind ! Another monster will carry off the moon, and render it totally useless ; the stars shall fly away and vanish

* “ Pictorial History of England,” vol. i., p. 226.

from the heavens. The Great Serpent moves from the great deep; the earth is violently agitated; the tottering hills tumble headlong from their foundations; the sea rushes impetuously over the earth. The wolf Fenris advancing, fire shall flash from his eyes and nostrils; the Great Serpent follows him, and vomits forth floods of poison, which overwhelm the air and the waters. This terrible monster places himself by the side of the wolf. In this confusion the heaven shall cleave asunder; and by this breach the genii of fire enter on horseback, and passing over the bridge of heaven,* break it to pieces. Thence they direct their course to a plain, where they are joined by the wolf Fenris and the Great Serpent. Thither also appear Loke and the giant Rymer, and with him all the giants of the frost, who follow Loke even unto death. The genii of fire march first in battle array. During these prodigies Heimdal, the door-keeper of the gods, rises up: he violently sounds his trumpet to awaken the gods, who instantly assemble. The gods are clad in armour: Odin puts on his golden helmet, his resplendent cuirass; he grasps his sword, and marches directly against the wolf Fenris. He hath Thor at his side; but this god cannot assist him, for he himself fights with the Great Serpent. The wolf Fenris devours Odin, and is immediately after slain by Vidar. Loke and Heimdal fight, and mutually kill each other. Thor beats down the Great Serpent to the earth; but at the same time falls dead upon the spot, suffocated with the floods of venom which the Serpent pours forth upon him.† Other of the combatants

* The rainbow was called by this name.

† We cannot but notice here the striking similarity which, in respect of this circumstance, appears to pervade Heathen mythology. Here Thor, the mediator-god, destroys the Great Serpent, but dies in the conflict. According to the Greeks, Apollo, who was also a son of the great god, destroyed the serpent Python; and the Hindoos teach that Chrishna, who was an incarnation of the deity in human shape, encountered the great envenomed serpent, Kalli Naga, and bruised his head and destroyed his power. Hercules is another instance of this resemblance. He too was a mortal son of the supreme God, and destroyed the enormous serpent of Lerna. These facts show how widely the distorted remains of primitive tradition had been scattered.

kill each other ; after which *Surtur* darts fire and flame over all the earth ; the whole world is presently consumed. See how this is related in the *Voluspa*. ‘Heimdal lifts up his crooked trumpet, and sounds it aloud. Odin consults the head of Mimi. The great ash, that ash sublime and fruitful, is violently shaken, and sends forth a groan. The giant bursts his irons. What is doing among the gods ? What is doing among the genii ? The land of the giants is filled with uproar : the deities collect and assemble together. The dwarfs sigh and groan before the doors of their caverns. O ye inhabitants of the mountains ! can you say whether any thing will yet remain in existence ?’

“After all these prodigies there will succeed many new abodes. The best mansion of all will be Gimle. In this palace good and just men shall abide. In Nastrande there is a vast and direful structure. Here the impure, the perjured, and murderers remain.

“Then we see emerge from the bosom of the waves an earth clothed with a most lovely verdure. The floods retire : the eagle soars wheresoever he lists. The fields produce the fruit without culture. Misfortunes are banished from the world. A palace more resplendent than the sun rises to view ; it is adorned with a roof of gold. There the assemblies of good men shall inhabit, and give themselves up to joy and pleasure throughout all ages.” *

This was the religion of the ancient inhabitants of the North. Whether it had been completely developed at the period of the Saxon invasion of this country, has been doubted ; but it is plain that the superstition which this people introduced was essentially that which has been described. It is true, that afterwards the ferocious tendency of the system was more fully carried out by the Danes ; and that they, in their successful inroads into Britain, brought over a faith which, although the same in its elements with that of the Saxons, was much more savage and debasing in its effect on general character. Since, however, it is

* Edda, fab. xxxii., xxxiii. Mallet's "Northern Antiquities," vol. i., pp. 95-98. *Voluspa*.

impossible now to determine with exactness, at what period this progressive degeneracy was more particularly manifested, or when the public mind was more fully brought under its ferocious influence ; it has been thought best to give, once for all, a fair view of the system, reminding our readers that there is reason to believe the Saxons held it in its milder form, the Danes in its more violent.

When speaking of the religion of ancient nations, it is always important to ascertain, if possible, to what extent the minds and lives of the people were brought under its authority. On this point we have now but little information. It is probable that in the early ages, and, indeed, at the time when the Saxons subdued Britain, the great elements of the system which we have described were universally held by the northern nations. But afterward, when its superstition and absurdity had greatly increased, we hear of persons who disavowed their belief in its tenets. In the life of Olave, king of Norway, a warrior says publicly, "I would have thee know that I believe neither in idols nor spirits. I have travelled in many places ; I have met with giants and monstrous men ; they could never overcome me. Thus, to this present hour, my own force and courage are the sole objects of my belief." *

On the erection of the several Saxon kingdoms in Britain, the Pagan religion of the conquerors was established. As has been already remarked, although the previous population was not entirely swept away, they were totally and entirely subdued in those parts of the country which the Saxons occupied ; and as no amalgamation took place, there was no softening or modifying of the northern Heathenism. Christianity shrunk from contact with the unhallowed rites and sanguinary sacrifices of the Scandinavian religion ; and where any thing of Druidism remained, it was generally associated with that unbending spirit for which the aboriginal inhabitants were remarkable. Consequently Christianity, in all the beauty of its public profession, its worship, ordinances, and holy services, disappeared from the greater part of the coun-

* MALLET'S "Northern Antiquities," vol. i., p. 128.

try, and the dark cloud of Heathenism returned, with all its moral and spiritual degradation and wretchedness.

Yet it must be admitted, that the Saxons appear in many instances to have arrived at that state in which the mind becomes too cultivated for an implicit belief in palpable absurdities ; when the folly and incongruity of spreading sensual pleasures before an immortal spirit, or of trusting to mortal gods, are strikingly apparent. In all probability, however, those who entertained such views were in advance of the mass of the population. Yet their influence may have greatly contributed to promote the reception of Christianity, when it was offered to their acceptance.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY FROM THE DEPARTURE
OF THE ROMANS TO THE MISSION OF AUGUSTINE.

BEFORE we enter upon this period of Christian history, it will be necessary to notice the rise and progress of monastic institutions, which, although no part of Christianity, exercised great power, during this and the following ages, over the religion of England and of the world.

At all times there have been found persons who, actuated by various motives, have sought, in retirement from the business and bustle of the world, that enjoyment which they have despaired of attaining while surrounded by its pleasures and harassed by its cares and perils. The Essenes, a Jewish sect, spoken of at large by Josephus and Philo, appear to have been the first who, to any considerable extent, adopted this course of life as a part of religious duty. They abandoned all commercial pursuits, and employed themselves, sometimes in the manufacture of useful articles, but principally in husbandry. They all laboured for their support, and had a common table and common property. They renounced marriage, and only admitted such women among them as were advanced in years, and had been virgins from their youth. Their numbers were maintained, either by the adoption of children, or by the voluntary adhesion of young men. They were very remarkable for the uprightness of their general conduct, and the zeal and constancy with which they adhered to their religious tenets.

Nothing is clearer to the judgment of one who takes the Bible for his guide, than that the religion of Christ neither commands nor sanctions such austerity or seclusion. The Gospel was designed to enable men to "live righteously, soberly, and godly in the present evil world," and thus to leaven it with righteousness, and subdue it unto God.

But the mystic theology which sprung from the Platonic school in the third century, tended to introduce into the Christian church a practice very analogous to that of the Essenes. By teaching that the Divine Nature was diffused through all human souls, and that its latent virtues and power of instructing men in divine things were to be elicited by silence, tranquillity, solitude, and mortification, it gave rise to sentiments which only wanted a favourable opportunity to burst forth into influence and action.

This opportunity was soon afforded. About the beginning of the year 250, during the Decian persecution, a Christian of Thebais in Upper Egypt, named Paul, retired from the world, and shut himself up in a cell in the Desert. It is said that he was driven to this act by the baseness of his covetous sister, who, with her husband, threatened to inform against him as a Christian, and thus constrained him to give up his estates to her. Paul the Hermit remained in this solitude ninety years, and died at the age of one hundred and thirteen, having acquired extraordinary reputation for piety, and attracted many to follow his example.

“The cause of morality, and, indeed, of Christianity in general, suffered deeply by a capital error which was received in this century ; an error admitted without any evil design, but yet with the utmost imprudence, and which, through every period of the church even to the present time, has produced other errors without number, and multiplied the evils under which the Gospel has so often groaned. Jesus Christ prescribed to all His disciples one and the same rule of life and manners. But certain Christian doctors, either through a desire of imitating the nations among whom they lived, or in consequence of a natural propensity to a life of austerity, were induced to maintain, that Christ had established a double rule of sanctity and virtue, for two different orders of Christians. Of these rules, the one was ordinary, the other was extraordinary ; the one of a lower dignity, the other more sublime ; the one for those in the active scenes of life, the other for those who, in a sacred retreat, aspired after the glory of a celestial state. In consequence of this wild

system, they divided into two parts all those moral doctrines and instructions which they had received either by writing or tradition. One of these divisions they called 'precepts,' and the other 'counsels.' They gave the name of 'precepts' to those laws that were universally obligatory upon all orders of men ; and that of 'counsels' to those that related to Christians of a more sublime rank, who proposed to themselves great and glorious ends, and breathed after an intimate communion with the Supreme Being.

" This double doctrine gave rise to the ascetics, a set of men who professed uncommon degrees of sanctity and virtue, and declared their resolution of obeying all the counsels of Christ, in order to their enjoying communion with God here, and ascending with greater facility to Him after death. They considered themselves prohibited from the use of wine and flesh, and from matrimony. They imposed upon themselves the most austere discipline, attenuating their bodies by watchings, abstinence, and labour. They were distinguished from other Christians, not only by their title, but also by their garb. In the second century those who embraced this austere kind of life submitted themselves to all these severe mortifications in private, without breaking asunder their social bonds ; but in process of time they retired into deserts, and, after the example of the Essenes, formed themselves into certain companies.

" Nothing is more obvious than the reasons that gave rise to this austere sect. One of the principal was, the ill-judged ambition of the Christians to resemble the Greeks and Romans ; many of whose sages and philosophers distinguished themselves from the generality by their maxims, by their habit, and, indeed, by the whole plan of life and manners which they had formed to themselves, and by which they acquired a high degree of esteem and authority. It is also well known, that of all these philosophers there were none whose sentiments and discipline were so well received by the ancient Christians, as those of the Platonics and Pythagoreans, who prescribed in their lessons two rules of conduct ; one for the sages, who aspired to the sublimest

heights of virtue; and another for the people, involved in the cares and hurry of active life.” *

Various doctrines which had been promulgated in the preceding century, gave a great stimulus to this course of life. It was still further promoted by the character and labours of Anthony. This distinguished individual was also a native of Upper Egypt. His parents were persons of property; but Anthony, having understood some passages in our Saviour's discourses in a literal sense, distributed the property which came to him by inheritance at an early age, partly among his neighbours, and partly among the poor, and then retired to live a solitary life in the neighbourhood of his native village. In this seclusion he was said to have received the gift of miracles, and marvellous tales were told of temptations with which he was unsuccessfully assailed by the devil. Consequently great multitudes of disciples flocked to him, and at their importunity he erected several monasteries. He is said to have built the first at Phaium, A.D. 305. He was an intimate friend of Athanasius, at whose request he journeyed to Alexandria, to assist him in his controversy with the Arians.

Anthony is esteemed the father of monachism, being the first who introduced a regular order into the societies of these Christian ascetics, and prescribed rules for the direction of their conduct. This was greatly improved by his disciples Pachomius and Hilarion, who promoted the establishment of similar fraternities in Palestine and Syria. About the same time this system was introduced into the East of Europe; and in the year of our Lord 370, Martin, who is called “a soldier, a hermit, a bishop, and a saint,” erected the first monastery in Gaul. From this period, monastic institutions were rapidly introduced into almost every part of the Christian world, and were generally esteemed as auxiliary to the promotion of religion.

Yet it soon became apparent, that the rigorous character of the system, to a great extent, defeated its intention; and in the sixth century a new order of monks arose, which

* MOSHEIM's “Ecclesiastical History,” vol. i., pp. 193–195.

gained a greater degree of celebrity than any that preceded it. Benedict, an Italian, was its founder. His religious rules were at first drawn up for the government of a monastery at Mount Cassino, between Rome and Naples, over which he presided ; but they were afterward adopted by, or forced upon, a very great number of such institutions. His principal object seems to have been, to render the discipline of his monks milder, their foundation more stable, and their manners more regular, than those of other monasteries. The whole time of the monastics of this order he directed to be divided between prayer, reading, the education of youth, and other pious and learned labours. In those early ages the monks were not considered to be of the clerical order ; very few were ordained even in the most numerous Houses, and these were distinguished by the addition of "presbyter" to their names ; as, "Jerome, presbyter," "Beda, presbyter." The council of Chalcedon expressly distinguished the monks from the clergy ; and it was not until the time of Clement V., A.D. 1311, that they were all compelled to take holy orders.

Patrick, who was a relation of Martin of Tours, introduced monachism into Ireland ; and during the fourth and fifth centuries it became general in Britain and other parts of Western Europe.

When these institutions first arose, the inhabitants of monasteries were remarkable for their abstemiousness, coarse clothing, constant devotions, frequent fasts, celibacy, austere discipline, and regular method of living. They were much given to letters, to the study of doctrine, and to piety ; on which account public schools were held in monasteries. To these ends tend all the rules of Basil, bishop of Cappadocia, which were received throughout the East. This mode of life was consequently much extolled and followed. Young women consecrated themselves to God, for purposes of devotion and piety ; yet they were not enclosed with impassable barriers, nor bound by an irreversible vow. But the fictions of modern times present these monks as clothed in peculiar garments, with shaven heads and hoods ; while mendicity,

various superstitions, miracles, exemption from episcopal authority, and many other particulars, are spoken of as parts of the system, in order to justify the errors which were afterwards introduced. As those institutions progressed, a great admiration of a life of celibacy prevailed; and, in consequence, many contentions arose in the church respecting it, toward the end of the fourth century. A superstitious notion also sprang up about the remains of good and eminent men, called "relics," and the advantage of collecting them within cities and churches. Great virtue was ascribed to them, and many miracles were supposed to be wrought by their touch. Jerome and Gregory Nazianzen became fierce advocates for this superstition, against Vigilantius and others. Thus monachism degenerated, until the so-called "religious Houses" became nurseries of beggary, idleness, ignorance of the Scriptures, superstitious observances, and foul idolatry.*

In attempting to convey some accurate idea of the state and progress of the Christian faith from the invasion of the Saxons to the mission of Augustine, it will be necessary to recall attention to the facts which we have already elicited; namely, that Christianity was introduced into Britain at a very early period of the Christian era, and was generally received by the Roman and British population; and that in all the eastern, central, and southern parts of the island, which were subdued by the Saxons, the Paganism of the North of Europe prevailed. Consequently, Christianity existed, either as the religion of those Britons who were subdued by the Saxons, and who lived among them as serfs; or of those who inhabited Damnonia (Devonshire and Cornwall) and Wales. With respect to the Britons who lived among the Saxons subject to their government, it cannot be expected that we should have any definite information. With the Saxon authority, the Saxon Paganism prevailed. The temples, priests, sacrifices, doctrines, usages, were all in accordance with the northern mythology. Christianity, therefore, could not have been sanctioned, its doctrines and spirit could have met with no encouragement from such

* SPANHEIM'S "Ecclesiastical Annals," pp. 300-302, 317.

governors. Yet, we cannot believe that these circumstances eradicated this holy religion from the hearts of those who enjoyed its hallowing and cheering influence. It is most probable, that many of the Christian part of the population cherished in secret their holy faith, and earnestly desired its public and general re-establishment. That such was the case, some facts, incidentally noticed in the history of these times, appear to prove. For instance: when Gregory sent Augustine on his mission to evangelize the Saxons, in his letter to the clergy of France, requesting them to countenance and aid the attempt, he says, "We are informed that, through the mercy of God, the English nation is desirous to turn Christian; but the clergy of your nation, notwithstanding their neighbourhood, refuse to assist them in their good motions." * In his letter to Queen Brunichild, on the same occasion, Gregory makes a similar statement, with the like complaint against the clergy. It is not easy to account for the rise and extensive circulation of such reports, without attributing them to the desires which the subdued Christian population of Britain felt and expressed for the ordinances of Christian worship, of which they had been deprived.

It is, however, to Wales and Cornwall that we are to look for the progress of Christianity in Britain during this period. Fuller says, "The entire body of the British church at this time was in Wales, where Bangor on the north, and Caer-leon (on Usk, in Monmouthshire) on the south, were the two eyes thereof, for learning and religion. The latter had in it the court of king Arthur, the see of an archbishop, a college of two hundred philosophers, who therein studied astronomy; and was a populous place of great extent." † There is reason to believe that Bangor, near Chester, was of equal eminence with Caer-leon for men of learning and piety. It is said that the monastery at this place contained two thousand one hundred monks, divided into seven courses, of three hundred each.

* TIMPSON'S "Church History," p. 55.

† FULLER'S "Church History of Britain," vol. i., p. 67.

Respecting this portion of church history, important information is obtained from Gildas, who, according to Leland, was born A.D. 511, and was consequently a living witness of the events which he has recorded.* He was a Briton, and a monk of Bangor, a person of great piety and considerable talents; and as his "History" and "Epistle" have been preserved to the present time, they afford us a picture of the state of the country, nowhere else to be obtained.

By modern writers in general, he has been stigmatized as morose and severe; and, on the principles sometimes adopted, there can be no question that this charge is just. It must, however, be remembered, that when an author arraigns the vices of mankind, and exhibits the errors of professing Christians, it is important to ascertain the standard of truth and morals by which he himself is guided. Thus, while a person, whose views of religion penetrate no deeper than conformity to an established creed, and attendance upon appointed external observances, would feel disposed to treat a certain state of society with great leniency; a man who had, by a careful study of holy Scripture, obtained a correct knowledge of the fallen condition of mankind,—the glorious redemption which is procured by the death of Christ, the happy and holy privileges which become the portion of those who, being created again in Christ Jesus, are thus translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son,—would, when speaking on the same subject, use much stronger language, and perhaps denounce as irreligious what the other might even allow to be amiable and excellent.

We think it was thus with Gildas; and, instead of inferring from his strong expressions, that the religion of Christ

* Immense difficulties arise out of the conflicting accounts which have been given as to the time when this writer lived, and in regard to the chronology of the various events with which he is said to have been connected. These have been very ably stated by Mr. Wright, in his *Biographia Britannica Literaria*. Yet, as Gildas is referred to by Bede, there can be no doubt that he lived in the early part of the sixth century, and was the author of the work now bearing his name.

had forsaken the country, we regard him as a faithful and fervent minister of the Gospel, acting in the spirit of ardent zeal, reproofing sin and enforcing holiness with all the plainness and power of Scripture truth, which, indeed, he largely uses to effect his object. According to this writer, the desolation and misery which resulted from the Saxon invasion at first had a favourable effect on the morals and religion of those Britons who had been able to maintain their independence; but when these immediate witnesses of national calamity had been removed by death, a general declension took place among all orders of society. As a specimen of the manner of this early British Christian writer, we give the closing paragraphs of his "Epistle to the British Nation:"—

"And now I will assuredly speak what I think: This reprehension might have been framed after a milder fashion; but what availeth it to touch only with the hand, or dress with gentle ointment, that wound which, with imposthumation or stinking corruption, is now grown so horrible, that it requireth the searing-iron, or the ordinary help of fire, if haply by any means it may be cured; the diseased in the meanwhile not seeking a medicine, and the physician much erring from a rightful remedy? O ye enemies of God, and not priests! O ye traders of wickedness, and not bishops! O ye betrayers, and not successors, of the holy apostles! O ye adversaries, and not servants, of Christ! Ye have certainly heard, at the least, the sound of the words, which are in the second lesson taken out of the apostle Saint Paul, although ye have no way observed the admonition and virtue of them, but even as statues (that neither see nor hear) stood that day at the altar, while, both then and continually since, he hath thundered in your ears, saying: *Brethren, it is a faithful speech, and worthy of all acceptance.* He called it 'faithful and worthy;' but ye have despised it as unfaithful and unworthy. *If any man coveteth a bishopric, he desireth a good work.* Ye do mightily covet a bishopric, in respect of avarice; but not for spiritual convenience, and for the good work which is suitable to the place, ye want it.

It behoveth, therefore, such an one to be free from all cause of reprehension. At this saying we have more need to shed tears than to utter words ; for it is as much as if the apostle had said, ' He ought to be of all others most free from occasion of rebuke.' *The husband of one wife :* which is likewise so condemned among us as if that word had never proceeded from him. *Sober, wise.* Yea, which of ye hath once desired to have these virtues engrafted in him ? *Using hospitality.* For this, if perchance it hath been found among ye, yet being nevertheless rather done to purchase the favour of the people, than to accomplish the commandment, it is of no avail ; our Lord and Saviour saying thus, ' Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward.' Moreover, *A man adorned ; not given to wine : no fighter ; but modest, not contentious, not covetous.* O lamentable change ! O horrible contempt of the heavenly commandments ! And do ye not continually use the force of your words and actions for the overthrowing, or rather overwhelming, of those, for whose defence and confirmation (if need had required) ye ought to have suffered pains, yea, and to have lost your very lives ?

" And now, trembling truly to make any longer stay on these matters, I can, for a conclusion, affirm one thing certainly ; which is, that all these are changed into contrary actions, insomuch that clerks (which not without grief of heart I here confess) are shameless and deceitful in their speeches, given to drinking, covetous of filthy lucre, having faith, or, to say more truly, unfaithfulness, in an impure conscience, ministering, not upon probation of their good works, but upon foreknowledge of their evil actions ; and being thus defiled with innumerable offences, they are notwithstanding admitted unto the holy office. It is promised unto every good priest, ' Whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, shall be likewise loosed in heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, shall be in like sort bound in heaven.' But how shall ye loose any thing, that it may be loosed also in heaven ? since yourselves, for your sins, are severed from heaven, and hampered in the bands of your

own heinous offences ; as Solomon saith, ‘ With the cord of his sins every one is tied.’ And with what reason shall ye bind any thing on this earth, that above this world may be likewise bound, unless it be your only selves, who, entangled in your iniquities, are so detained on this earth that ye cannot ascend into heaven, but, without conversion unto our Lord in this life, will fall down into the miserable prison of hell ?

“ Neither let any priest flatter himself upon the knowledge of the particular cleanness of his own body, since their souls over whom he hath government shall in the day of judgment be required at his hands as the murderer of them, if any, through his ignorance, sloth, or fawning adulation, have perished ; because the stroke of death is not less terrible that is given by a good man, than that which is inflicted by an evil person : otherwise would the apostle never have said that which he left unto his successors as a fatherly legacy : ‘ I am clear and clean from the blood of all : for I have not forborne to declare unto you all the counsel of God.’ Being, therefore, mightily drunken with the use and custom of sins, and extremely overwhelmed, as it were, with the waves of increasing offences, forthwith seek ye, with the utmost endeavours of your minds, after this your shipwreck, that one plank of repentance which is left, whereby ye may escape and swim to the land of the living, that from you may be turned away the wrath of our Lord, who saith : ‘ I will not the death of a sinner, but that he may be converted and live.’ And may the same Almighty God of all consolation and mercy preserve his few good pastors from all evil, and, the common enemy being overcome, make them free inhabitants of the heavenly city of Jerusalem, which is the congregation of all saints. Grant this, O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; to whom be honour and glory, world without end. Amen.” *

Here, it must be observed, we have a clear and distinct testimony borne against sin : no rank is excused, no pallia-

* GILDAS, as translated by Giles. It will be seen that the quotations from Scripture differ considerably from our version.

tions are offered. Kings sitting on their thrones, the highest dignitaries of the church, are brought into the divine presence, their wickedness exposed in all its native deformity and guilt, while the terrible denunciations of future wrath are referred to as motives to amendment.

Also, in these extracts, and more abundantly in the body of his work, we have an ample recognition of the necessity of repentance and conversion. No attention to outward ordinances, no reliance upon means, are recommended; repentance is insisted on, an abandonment of iniquity is urged, as the only plank which can possibly save the sinner from the eternal death with which he is threatened, and convey him to the land of spiritual life. Conversion is held forth as the only deliverance from condemnation, and as the merciful purpose of God respecting every penitent sinner.

It must also be observed, that this holy man relies entirely on divine truth for argument and authority. Nothing can be more evident throughout the whole epistle than that he invariably appeals to the Bible, as the great and only standard of truth. It must be gratifying to any Christian mind to find a production of this early and obscure age so richly imbued with portions of holy writ. This affords clear and satisfactory evidence, that, if copies of it were then scarce, its importance was not undervalued by the pious ministers of the British church, and that they were familiar with its language.

The general tone and spirit of the entire address equally deserve our attention. It breathes a spiritual unction worthy the best age of the church, and a zeal for God and the honour of His cause indicative of an apostolic spirit. The plainness with which public manners are arraigned, the fervour with which amendment is urged, the force with which the spirituality and power of the Gospel salvation are declared, remind us of the discourses and writings of Latimer, Baxter, and Simpson. A church that produced a minister like this, and which had, besides, "a few others," whom such a man calls "good pastors," must still have retained a large measure of divine truth and divine influence. And

although (as the whole bears obvious evidence) wickedness might have so prevailed, that not only were nobles and kings corrupted, but even ministers elevated to important offices in the church had forgotten what was due to their sacred character, and had sunk into sinful conformity to the errors and evils of the times ; yet we cannot but hope that in these circumstances the word of truth was in many cases faithfully preached, and that, in accordance with the merciful design of its Divine Author, it became "the power of God unto salvation" to very many souls.

In our efforts to place before the reader the state and progress of Christianity at this period of our history, we must be almost entirely dependent on the biographical sketches that have been preserved of persons eminent for their piety, zeal, and learning, and that throw light upon the objects and events with which they were associated.

The first of these is Dubricius. He is said to have been a disciple of Germanus when he visited this country for the suppression of the Pelagian heresy, and to have been appointed by him a bishop, or rather an archbishop. According to the old register of Llandaff, he had the oversight of all "the right-hand part of Britain." By this phrase Archbishop Usher thinks South Wales is intended ; while Stillingfleet supposes that both North and South were included, and that Dubricius had authority over the church throughout the whole of Wales. This person was as eminent for piety and learning as for rank and station. Before his elevation, the authors of his Life speak of the great number of scholars who resorted to him from all parts of Britain, many of them persons of high rank and reputation. He is related to have had two places at which he used to receive and instruct his disciples. The one was at Hentland on the river Wye, where he had one thousand students bred to divinity and human learning ; the other was at Moch-Ross, where he had a convenient settlement for study and devotion.*

Subsequently to the Saxon invasion, when Ambrosius Aurelianus had rallied the scattered Britons, and placed him-

* COLLIER'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 112.

self at their head, he laboured zealously to promote the cause of religion, by repairing the churches, and encouraging the ministers of the Gospel. According to Geoffry of Monmouth, (whose relation in this instance seems sufficiently sustained by other evidence,) he also, in a great council of the Britons, appointed Sampson to preside over the British church in the North, having his seat at York, and Dubricius over that of Wales. Some time after this, we are informed that, Pelagianism having revived, a council was held at Brovi, in Cardiganshire, at which not only the clergy, but many of the laity, attended. At this meeting Dubricius, whose great age incapacitated him for the arduous duties of his station, resigned it, and was succeeded by David.

This person was a son of a prince of Wales, and uncle to the celebrated king Arthur. He was born toward the end of the fifth century; and became a man of considerable learning, an able speaker, and remarkable for the strictness and austerity of his life. At the council of Brovi he was appointed archbishop of Wales, and, with the consent of king Arthur, removed the seat of it from Caer-leon to Menevia, thenceforth called St. David's. Soon after, about A.D. 529, another synod was convened at a place called Victoria, when the acts of the preceding meeting, which had condemned Pelagianism, were confirmed, and several other provisions made for the benefit of the church. This excellent man appears to have been equally talented and pious. His life was one of continued exertion in the defence and promotion of pure religion. He was revered in his own day as an able and eminent minister of Christ, and succeeding ages have done honour to his memory. An ancient author, speaking of him, says, that "his holy life and bright example shine forth conspicuous to all. He instructed the people both by his word and his example. His preaching was most powerful, but his actions far more so. The ornament of the religious, the life of the needy, the defence of the orphan, the supporter of widows, the father of his pupils, making himself all things to all men, that he might win them to Christ."*

* GIRALDUS CAMBRENSIS, as quoted in *Horæ Britannicæ*, vol. ii., p. 228.

Between the synods of Brovi and Victoria, and consequently during the time when David presided over the Welsh church, Arthur defeated the Saxons under Cerdic, at the great battle of Badon Mount, by which these Heathen invaders were prevented from crossing the Severn, and the Britons of Wales preserved the enjoyment of their liberty and religion.

About this period also lived two eminent divines, both called Sampson. The elder was primate of the British church at York; but, being compelled to retire when the Saxons acquired possession of that part of the country, he travelled into Armorica in France. He was succeeded by Sampson the younger, who was consecrated bishop at large by Dubricius. But he, too, was compelled to abandon his charge, and to take refuge in Armorica, where he was made archbishop of Dole. He is said to have been of royal extraction, and remarkable for the many miracles which he wrought.

Paternus was another Christian of eminence, who lived in this age. He was an intimate friend of David the bishop. He was descended from a noble family in Armorica; but, being more attached to religious retirement than to the pleasures and honours of life, he left his family, and sailed into Ireland, where he lived in seclusion for several years. Thence he came over to Wales, where his great piety and exemplary conduct raised him to high distinction.

Other names are preserved of persons eminent in the church at this period; but as few incidents in their lives have been recorded, we pass them over, in order to notice more at length the life and character of Columba, whose labours and piety not only shed a lustre over the age in which he lived, but left visible results to future generations.

Columba, or, as he is sometimes, with greater propriety, called, Colum-kille, was a native of Ireland, descended from the royal family of that kingdom, and nearly allied to the kings of Scotland.* He was born about A.D. 521. It is

* His father was Felim, the son of Fergus, who was grandson of the great Nial king of Ireland; and the mother of Felim was Aithne, daughter of Lorn, who first reigned, in conjunction with his brother Fergus, over the

said, that some remarkable circumstances took place in connexion with his birth, which led his parents to believe that he was destined to an extensive sphere of usefulness in the Christian church; and, his quickness of understanding and early disposition to godliness confirming this impression, they lost no time in providing him with such education as tended to qualify him for the sacred office. He was first committed to the care of a pious presbyter, and afterward successively to that of two bishops, all of whom were charmed and surprised with the holiness and proficiency of their pupil. After leaving these preceptors, Columba spent some time in the monastery of Clon. In the twenty-eighth year of his age he left this place, and founded the monastic institution of Darmagh, where he deposited a copy of the Evangelists, which he had transcribed. It is probable that, in the interval between his building this monastery and his coming to Britain, he visited several foreign countries. It is even said that he raised a similar establishment in Italy, and that in France king Sigebert made him large promises, if he would remain with him. But Columba, whose ambition was to be useful rather than great, told him, that he was so far from coveting the wealth of others, that for Christ's sake he had long before renounced his own.

On the return of Columba to Ireland, considering that his own country richly enjoyed the light of the Gospel, and abounded in pious and learned ministers; while the greater part of Scotland was still covered with darkness, and lay in the shackles of superstition; he cast upon these dismal regions a pitying eye; and, although the prospect was very forbidding, he determined to carry the light of the Gospel to that benighted land.

Accordingly, A.D. 563, he set out in a wicker-boat covered with hides, accompanied by twelve of his friends and followers, and landed at the Isle of Hi or Iona, near the confines

Scots or Dalreudini, in Argyllshire. In those times noblemen were not seldom the preachers of the Gospel. See "the Life of Columba," by Dr. John Smith; to which work we are mainly indebted for the sketch we have given of the life and labours of this eminent man.

of the Scottish and Pictish territories. This fact is thus stated by Bede :—" In the year of our Lord 565, when Justin the Younger, the successor of Justinian, had the government of the Roman empire, there came into Britain a famous priest and abbot, a monk by habit and life, whose name was Columb, to preach the word of God to the provinces of the northern Picts, who are separated from the southern parts by steep and rugged mountains ; for the southern Picts, who dwell on this side of those mountains, had long before, as is reported, forsaken the errors of idolatry, and embraced the truth, by the preaching of Nynias, a holy man of the British nation." *

As Columba was then in the forty-second year of his age, he needed all the vigour of mind and body that he possessed, in encountering those difficulties which stood opposed to the success of his mission. The Scots were in so barbarous a state, that some of them, regardless of the sanctity of his character, made more than one attempt upon his life ; and the king, not more civilized than his people, ordered his gate to be shut when the holy man first approached it. The priests, being more interested than others in the maintenance of superstition, were the most forward to oppose him ; and they wanted neither eloquence, influence, nor art to effect their purpose ; while the country, being rough, woody, mountainous, and greatly infested with wild beasts, added much to the difficulties of his task. In addition to all, the dialect of the people was so different from his own, that he was for some time compelled to address them through an interpreter.

Notwithstanding all these obstacles, in the course of a few years the greater part of the Pictish kingdom was brought to acknowledge the truth of Christianity, and numbers were savingly converted to God. Monasteries were built in many places, and churches generally established. Columba as primate superintended and directed all the affairs of the Pictish churches, and many of the Scotch and Irish. He was highly revered, not only by the king of the Picts, but also by all

* BEDE'S " Ecclesiastical History," lib. iii., cap. 4.

the neighbouring princes, who courted his acquaintance, and liberally assisted him in his expensive undertakings. His life and labours were well appreciated by the people generally ; so that whenever he walked abroad, he was received with the highest demonstrations of respect and joy, crowds attending him wherever he went ; and when at home, he was resorted to for aid and advice, as the physician for both body and soul. His monastery was, perhaps, the chief seminary of learning in Europe at the time, and the nursery from which not only all the similar institutions which he himself had established, (in number above three hundred,) but also many of those in neighbouring nations, were supplied with learned divines and able pastors.

In our day of missionary effort and enterprise, it may be useful to inquire into the causes which led to this great and almost unexampled success. Although we cannot enter fully into the subject, it is beyond doubt, that Columba's talents were of a very superior kind. An uncommon greatness of soul is shown in every part of his extensive schemes ; while the manner of their execution proves his wisdom, perseverance, and zeal. His firmness and fortitude are also conspicuous ; and it is evident that he exhibited extraordinary address, personal accomplishments, and colloquial talents. All the advantages which he possessed by nature were greatly improved and promoted by the best education which the times could afford, and derived additional force from unceasing application and intense study.

Yet all these attainments, even when united in one person, could never have produced the results to which we have referred. We must, therefore, in order to obtain any satisfactory solution of the case, regard the character of Columba in another aspect. We must refer to his early, uniform, and strong spirit of piety. Devoted from his birth to the service of God, and ardently bent on the pursuit of holiness, he seems to have almost reached the goal before others think of starting in the race. Yet, far from resting in any measure of sanctity acquired in early life, he incessantly laboured after higher and higher degrees of it to his latest day. In every

moment, in every motion, and in every action of his life, he seems to have maintained in his spirit a lively sense, a strong impression, and almost a clear vision of the presence of God. This was constantly evinced in his conduct: in his less important affairs, as well as in those of great moment, God was always acknowledged. Columba was equally remarkable for the spirit and practice of prayer. To public prayers, morning and evening, he was so attentive, that he seems never to have allowed himself to dispense with the performance of them in any place or on any pretence whatever. Thus, in the midst of infidels, enemies, scoffers, and disturbers of his devotion, when he had no house to cover him, we find him keeping up the custom of glorifying God by stated and public worship. When at home, this service was performed by him in the church, where he punctually attended, even on the last day of his life. Of his private devotions it can only be said, that they were his delight; and, when not engaged in active duties, he was accustomed to spend whole days, and even nights, in secret supplication and communion with God.

This was indeed a striking and important feature in his character. It seems to have been his invariable rule, to undertake no work, nor engage in any business, without having first invoked the blessing of God. When about to officiate in any ministerial duty, he would first implore the divine presence. If he or any of his friends were preparing to proceed by sea or land, their first care was to implore God to be propitious, and their last words at parting were those of solemn prayer and benediction. If he administered medicines, he accompanied them with prayer to God. When he gave godly advice, it was done in connexion with petition to the Disposer of all hearts.

It is said that king Aidan, struck with the constant and perfect propriety of his conduct, once asked him whether he had so much as any motion or propensity to sin; to which Columba replied, as became his character, that, like all men, he had such motions and propensities; but that he would not consent to yield to one of them, though the whole

world, with all its honours and pleasures, were offered as his reward.

Much more has been recorded, which serves still further to exhibit the fervent and devoted piety of this eminent man ; but what has been already said will be sufficient for our purpose. His devotional spirit, his prayerful communion with God, clearly account for the abundant success of his mission. We see here a character formed upon the apostolic model ; a man who, in evident accordance with the spirit of Christ, was most exemplary in devising the best means for the advancement of his kingdom, and the salvation of the souls of men.

Columba, it will be perceived, adopted and extensively promoted the monastic system ; which we have considered as an excrescence engrafted on Christianity, rather than any part of our holy religion. Yet, while we see nothing in establishments of this kind, even as conducted by Columba himself, calculated to alter our opinion of the principle of monachism ; it is clear, that, in those which he founded and governed, the evil results were the least possible, and the advantages the greatest obtainable. There were, also, circumstances connected with the mission itself, which contributed to this good result. The people for whose benefit it was intended, were not only Heathens, but barbarous, uncivilized, and ignorant of many useful arts. The monks of Columba were adapted to be useful to such a people in every respect. They were not wasted by irrational and unmeaning austerities. Nothing that looked like superstitious penance or tormenting hardship was allowed by him. Unprofitable and ostentatious severity he avoided himself, and disliked in others.* His monks were also instructed in all useful employments. They understood and practised all the operations of agriculture and husbandry ; they were equally acquainted with house-building, and other necessary arts. They were, therefore, competent to aid and instruct the

* We find him sharply reproofing a person who, by way of doing penance, affected to impose upon himself hardships which neither God nor his spiritual guides required.

barbarous inhabitants in temporal as well as in spiritual matters.

Before we pass from this subject, it is necessary to observe, that Columba appears, in many other respects, to have adhered to the doctrine and practice of the primitive times, unswerved by the errors and corruptions which had begun to make inroads on the church even at this early period of its history.

Although there is reason to believe, that the British church had not been affected with these evils to the same extent as the continental churches, it is to be feared that here also a departure had taken place from the purity and simplicity of Scripture. Different orders, before unknown, had been recognised in the ministry. Some in the higher ranks lorded it over their brethren. The terms "bishop" and "archbishop" had been introduced as distinctive titles of honour; and in subsequent times great and extravagant powers were claimed for these dignitaries. As far as we have the means of ascertaining, Columba was free from these errors. Though himself only a presbyter, he thought it not at all inconsistent with propriety to exercise an oversight over most of the Scottish churches; and to a considerable extent he did the same in Ireland and Wales. Not only did he act thus himself, but his successors, the abbots of Iona, although only in priests' orders, exercised an authority superior to that of the bishops; a clear and obvious proof that Columba did not consider a presbyter as essentially inferior to a bishop. It is true that he availed himself of the assistance of bishops, and rendered them all due respect; and from this, Bishop Lloyd and Collier * labour to show

* This writer, although struggling to avert the consequence which follows from this conduct of Columba, allows that, on high-church principles, his practice was very irregular. This he admits and deplors in the following language:—"This inverting the order of the hierarchy, giving power and preference to an inferior character, was an unwarrantable innovation, and a flat contradiction to the practice of the catholic church." (COLLIER'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 142.) The most holy and useful minister of his age did not, therefore, in this particular, conform to the principles and practices of what is called "the catholic church."

that Columba admitted the superiority of the episcopal order; but it is impossible to obviate the force of the fact which has been related.

It is also important to notice, that Columba was guided entirely by the sacred Scriptures. This is plainly stated by Bede, but in language which shows that he did not appreciate the advantages which were thus supplied. Speaking of the monks of Iona, he says, "Having none to bring them the synodal decrees, by reason of their being so far away from the rest of the world, they therefore only practised such works of piety and chastity as they could learn from the prophetical, evangelical, and apostolical writings." Columba and his followers were led by the true light, and were consequently saved from many of the fallacies into which those persons sunk, who substituted the wisdom and inventions of men for the truth and power of God.

We come now to notice the state of religion in the extreme south-western portion of the island during this period. We have already seen that Christianity was introduced into Cornwall long prior to the retirement of the Romans, that even the sovereign had embraced this holy religion, and that Keby, his son, had devoted himself to a life of piety and ministerial usefulness. Amid the darkness occasioned by the distance of time, which is greatly increased by the scarcity of authentic records, we have ample evidence not only of the existence of Christianity in Cornwall, but also of its having received at this time a mighty impulse. It is a singular fact, that while Scotland was indebted to Irish missionaries for a knowledge of Christianity, Cornwall appears to have been under equal obligation to the sister island for a great revival of religion at this period.

Petrock was one of the eminent persons who contributed to this good work. He was the son of a king of Cambria. He travelled into Ireland for religious instruction. Thence he appears to have come into Cornwall, about A.D. 518, and to have landed at Padstow, which took its name from him, being at first called Petrocstow. Here he found a

Christian church; and being resolved, according to the fashion of the age, to spend his time in religious retirement, he with his companions travelled a few miles into the country, where, on an interesting piece of rising ground in a bend of the valley, they discovered the residence of Guron, a Christian hermit. This person gave up his hermitage to Petrock and his friends, and went further south, to the neighbourhood of Mevagissey, where he devoted himself to the Christian instruction of the people, and gave his name to the parish in which he dwelt. Petrock, with his friends, enlarged the solitary hermitage of Guron into a social one. "At that time," says Leland, "two petty kings reigned in Cornwall, Theodore and Constantine; by the liberality and piety of both of whom being assisted, he received a place very fit for building a monastery, to which the monks gave the name of Bosmanach, in their native language." This religious house, afterwards enlarged to a priory, occupied the site, and led to the erection, of the town of Bodmin. In this residence Petrock lived above thirty years, his death taking place about the middle of the sixth century. He was greatly revered for his learning and piety; and the house which he had established was inhabited by monks, of the Benedictine order, until the reign of Athelstan.

Cornwall was further favoured with an importation of many Irish saints. We are not informed whether they were induced to leave their native country by the prevalence of domestic troubles, or (which is more probable) were impelled by a strong desire to disseminate pure religion. They came, however, to labour as religious teachers in Cornwall, as in a country which, although professedly Christian, was at that time less favoured than their own.

We are told that, during the reign of Theodore, who is stated to have had a royal residence at Ryvyer or Rivier, which is situated on the north side of Phillack Creek, and forms the eastern bank of the entrance to Hayle from the sea; * a vessel entered the harbour from Ireland, containing

* "Rivier," says Leland, "was a castle of Theodore's, on the eastern side of the mouth of the Hayle River, at present (in the opinion of some

many of these Christian teachers. Some of them landed on the western bank, at St. Ives, and others on the eastern, at Rivier. Two of the latter company were, by some accident, or on account of some misunderstanding, put to death. The remainder of the entire party were protected and patronized. Among them we find several names which have for many ages been associated with the different localities which are supposed to have been the scenes of their labours. Some of these we shall mention.

Germoch was an Irish king, who had abdicated from the cares of royalty. He travelled in company with Brecca, a female who had spent some time in a nunnery at Meath. These, passing to the southern part of the country, came to Pencair, a hill in the parish of Pembro', and to Trenewith. Here they found a church, which they rebuilt on a more eligible site. In this place they settled, and the parish was called after her name, Brecca, or Breage, which is its present appellation. Here Germoch died; and a church was afterwards erected, and called after his name, now Gerمو. Of this Leland says, "St. Germochus, a church 3 miles from S. Michael's Mont; by est south est and a mile from the se; his tumb is scene ther. S. Germoke ther buried."*

It seems that many of these Irish emigrants had elevated family connexions, and possessed considerable substance, which they freely dedicated to the service of God. Sinnin, an abbot, who is said to have been at Rome with Patrick, was another of this company. He appears to have settled at the extreme west point of the county, and to have given his name to a parish still called Sennen.

Another of this party, and one who landed at the western side of the entrance to Hayle, was Ia, or Hya, the daughter of an Irish nobleman, and a disciple of Baricius, the companion of Patrick. The high point of land close to the place where they went on shore, was at that time called persons) buried in the sands," which have buried not a little of the lands adjoining, yet began to drive only about the year 1520. See WHITAKER's "Cathedral of Cornwall," vol. i., p. 329.

* LELAND, as quoted by WHITAKER, in his "Cathedral of Cornwall," vol. i., p. 335.

Pendinas.* Here, by the favour of the chief or nobleman residing in the neighbourhood, a church was built. Leland's account is as follows: "One Dinan, a great lord of Cornwall made a church at Pendinas, at the request of Iä, as it is written in Ië's Legende."† We have here the origin of the name and town of St. Ives, a place as remarkable at the present day for zeal in support of Christian missions, as if the inhabitants knew and felt their own obligations to the pure spirit which suggests and supports such blessed undertakings. With Iä came her two brothers, called Herygh and Vny. They were animated with similar feelings. One of them settled at, and gave his name to, St. Erth. The other remained at Lelant, and had his name associated with that more ancient appellation, the parish being still called Uny Lelant.

We might mention many more. Fingar or Guingar, Piala, Budock, a hermit, Burien, Carantoc, Crewenn, and others, in the same manner settled and died at the places which bear their several names, and at which their piety and memory were for ages afterward greatly revered. At this time, also, or perhaps at an earlier period, Piran, a very aged and eminent Christian minister, came to Cornwall from Ireland, and retired to a place still bearing his name, where he spent the remainder of his life. It may in the present day be doubted, whether persons would feel induced in such numbers to leave their native homes, and travel, and labour, and die, in foreign parts, for the promotion of the religion of Christ. The worldly-mindedness and practical infidelity which so abundantly prevail at the present day, unite their influence to throw discredit on these testimonies to the burning zeal and entire devotedness of Christians in ancient times. Yet they rest on a foundation too firm to be shaken. The disciples of Columba, for instance, about this time, not

* Pendinas, in the Cornish language, signifies "Hill-head," or "a fortified headland."

† "Iä's Legend" was a history drawn up at or near the time of her death, preserved with religious fidelity, and read with devout attention, in that church, during the offices of religion on the anniversary of her death every year.—WHITAKER'S "Cathedral of Cornwall," vol. ii., p. 2.

only pressed into every neighbouring Heathen nation, preaching the Lord Jesus ; but they even undertook voyages of discovery in the North Seas, in the hope that they might fall in with some hitherto-undiscovered Pagans, and be instrumental in turning them from darkness to light.

“ Nor,” which is more to our purpose at present, “ were they less zealous in rousing men to a greater regard for the truths of the Gospel, by preaching it in its native purity and simplicity, where it was already professed. We meet with some of them in every country of Europe ; and their learning and sanctity always procured them honour. The number of them that went to France, Italy, and other foreign countries, was so great, that the Bollandine writers observe, that ‘ all saints whose origin could not afterwards be traced, were supposed to have come from Ireland or Scotland.’ The zeal of the monks of Iona in disseminating knowledge and true religion in those dark ages, is indeed astonishing. It flamed in the bosom of age, no less than in the veins of youth. Cumian, at the age of seventy, set out for Italy, where he became a bishop ; and Columan, afterward bishop of Lindisfarn, could not have set out for England from Iona before he had arrived at the age of eighty. The account which Bede gives of Columan and other divines that went from Hii to England, is interesting and curious. They instructed a certain number of youth ; Aidan had the charge of twelve. They lived in the most plain and frugal manner, supporting themselves by the labour of their hands, and solicitous only to improve the heart : except some cattle, they had no wealth. If they got any money from the rich, they immediately gave it to the poor. Their houses were barely sufficient for their own accommodation ; for they never pretended to lodge or entertain the rich, who had nothing to get from them when they came, but the word of God, preached in the church. If the king, with five or six attendants, chose at any time to take refreshment with them, after the service was over, he must have contented himself with the plain and daily fare of the brethren. Bede adds, that they brought religion into such

repute, that a clergyman or monk was everywhere received with joy as a servant of God ; that when they travelled the road, people ran to them to get their blessing ; and that when they went to any village, which they did only when they had occasion to preach, baptize, or visit the sick, crowds gathered to hear them. ‘ In short,’ says he, ‘ the cure of souls was their great concern.’ ” *

Further proof of the prevalence of Christianity in Cornwall at this time, is found in the fact, that when, in the year 588, Telien, an eminent bishop of Wales, was sailing with a considerable company of Christians, ministers and others, into Bretagne, on account of an epidemic disease which nearly desolated Wales, he touched at Cornwall, where he was well received “ by Gerennius, the king of that country, who treated him and his people with all honour.” Seven years afterwards, on their return, they landed again at the same port, and found king Gerennius lying in the last agony of life, who, “ when he had received the holy sacrament from the hand of Telien, departed in joy to the Lord.”

From what has been said, it is evident that Christianity was not destroyed in Britain, either by the troubles consequent on the retirement of the Romans, or by the successful progress of the Saxon invasion, although the scene of its operations was more circumscribed than formerly. For, while Saxon Heathenism became the religion of the ruling classes, throughout the greater part of the island, the piety and independent spirit of the ancient Britons, unable to resist the storm, retired before it into Wales and Cornwall, where, from the circumstance of aggregation, their religion became more powerful in its influence, and more visible in its effects.

Hence we have, even in the meagre history of this period, which has been preserved to our time, clearer and more distinct references to the existence of Christianity, and to the purity, power, and extent of its influence on the public mind, than the annals of any preceding age exhibit. It is also remarkable, that while the barbarous valour of the northern

* DR. SMITH’S “ Life of Columba,” p. 56.

Heathens was trampling into the dust the disjointed and enervated remains of Roman greatness, and thus placing in peril the very existence of Christianity through a great part of Europe; Ireland, which had but recently received the truth, should have been so faithful to the letter and spirit of its teaching, as to have furnished an innumerable band of devoted labourers, ready to rush into every open door, to enlighten the benighted, to correct the erring, to rouse into diligence the lukewarm, and thus to diffuse a leaven of righteousness throughout all western Britain.

Yet this is the age when our country is usually considered to have been lying in the unmitigated darkness of Paganism! If this representation had only emanated from the Romish church, and had been confined to those who advocate Papal domination, it could excite no surprise. The evident independence of the British churches before the mission of Augustine, the contrast which their simple purity presented to the cumbrous machinery of the system that he introduced, would necessarily incline his friends and successors to overlook entirely the pre-existing Christianity of Britain, and to speak of Gregory and Augustine as "the apostles" of the island. It is remarkable, however, that such views should have been countenanced by Protestant authors, and should have obtained credit and currency through their writings; while it is plain, from what has been stated, that they are clearly contrary to the fact.

Prior to the arrival of Augustine in Britain, the entire authentic history of the period bears witness to its Christianity. It is evinced in every part of the western coast of the island, from the north of Scotland to the Land's End. It is proclaimed by the mouldering ruins of Iona, and by the monuments to the memory of her missionary monks found in every neighbouring land. Its records are written on the hills of Wales, and on the rocks of Cornwall. The names of our head-lands and harbours, our towns and villages, our sepulchral monuments and churches, unite with the trumpet voice of imperishable tradition, to attest the great fact, that, even during the fullest triumph of Saxon Paganism in

England, Christianity continued to shed its pure and hallowing influence over a large portion of the western peninsula of the island.

Nor can the character of the religion of this time be more successfully impugned. Let the piety of Columba be taken as an example, admitting it to be the brightest and the best. We do not undertake to defend all his views or practices ; but can his devotedness to God be denied ? Can his fervent piety be questioned ? Where shall we find a fairer copy of the mind and spirit and labouring zeal of the apostles of Christ ? His influence extended into Wales, and Cornwall was richly imbued with a ministry trained in the same school, and, as far as our means of information will enable us to judge, animated by the same spirit.

It is very difficult to treat on a subject of this kind without, although unintentionally, misrepresenting the real state of the case. Suppose, for instance, that a Christian writer were to exhibit to our view a picture of the religious condition of our country at the present time. He might display the prevalence of iniquity generally ; the vanity, pride, vain-glory, and licentiousness of the rich ; the ignorance, brutality, and reckless wickedness of the poor ; the open rejection of God and His Gospel, the practical infidelity, and indecent profaneness, which are found among all classes. While we should be compelled to admit the truth of all this, we should remember that the same mind, looking over the same country, and regarding its population in another aspect, might point out many who were converted to God, and who showed forth the praise of His holy name by a life of consistent purity and holiness ; might exhibit the learning, piety, and zeal of a Christian ministry whose labours were spread over the whole land ; and might, in fine, adduce numerous evidences of the existence and prevalence of real religion.

This is precisely the case with respect to the period which has been reviewed. We believe that Gildas had good grounds for his complaints, censures, and severe rebukes ; while, at the same time, it is far beyond doubt that religious truth was disseminated, vital religion in many instances enjoyed,

and Christianity publicly and generally recognised and professed, in the West of England. In a greater or lesser degree, this will be found to be the case in all Christian countries. At least, it will be so to the eye of him who, looking above professions, means, and ceremonies, dares not call any thing religion that does not subjugate the heart to Christ, and lead individuals to experience the favour, the presence, and the blessing of God.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PROGRESS OF ERROR IN THE CHURCH OF ROME
PRIOR TO THE MISSION OF AUGUSTINE.

As the Saxon kingdoms of Britain were converted to the faith of Christ principally through the instrumentality of Augustine and his co-adjutors, who were sent to this country for that purpose by the bishop of Rome ; and as they, of course, taught the doctrines, and established the practices and ceremonies, which then prevailed in the Romish church ; it is of some moment that we should endeavour to ascertain what was the precise quality of the Christianity which was thus promulgated. In order to this, it becomes necessary for us to investigate the earlier history of the church, and to trace, as fully as our limits will allow, its true state and character until the end of the sixth century.

The importance of this subject extends far beyond the gratification of a laudable curiosity to know what our Saxon ancestors were taught as the elements of the Christian faith. It is calculated to lead us to a careful investigation of the earliest errors which crept into the church, and thus to discriminate between the truth of God and the inventions of men. This is of special consequence at the present time. There has always been a disposition in human nature to look to past ages for the countenance and support of those usages which are of dubious intrinsic excellence, as if to sustain by the influence of vague authority what cannot be upheld by the plain declarations of Scripture or the deductions of reason. Efforts of this character, especially in connexion with ecclesiastical subjects, were, perhaps, never more prevalent than at the present day. When, therefore, antiquity is pleaded, it becomes not merely a privilege, but a duty, to submit it to the ordeal of that divine word, which is truth without any mixture of error.

With this for our guide, we will (with particular reference to Rome) carefully pass through the history of the Christian church; and, from the period of its first establishment to the end of the sixth century, endeavour to ascertain what portion of those errors which we believe now to compose the body of Popery, had been introduced and tolerated.

Nothing can by possibility be presented to the eye of enlightened reason more truly excellent in itself and in its application, than the religion of Christ as taught by our blessed Redeemer and His apostles. It gives a full portraiture of human nature in all its guilt, depravity, and wretchedness; it reveals God in all His purity, justice, truth, mercy, and love; it unfolds the counsels of heaven, and shows us, in all its harmony and beauty, the divine plan for the recovery of a world ruined by sin; in a word, it spreads before us divine grace in active and efficient operation. But in all this heavenly plan and procedure, there is one point to which our attention is particularly called. The Gospel offers us real blessings, and calls for a corresponding submission of mind and will. It brings before us a pardon actually written on the heart, by which the soul, being renewed in righteousness, may feel, that, though the Lord was angry, His anger is turned away. It offers to the pardoned sinner spiritual access unto God by a new and living way, even that of faith in the blood of Christ.

But while holding forth these substantial blessings and privileges to our acceptance, the Gospel requires a devotedness of heart and of life the most unreserved and entire. As, therefore, the great glory of the Gospel consists in the removal of types and shadows, and the introduction of a new and better, because a perfect and spiritual, economy; so the duties which it imposes are of a pure and spiritual character; and they who desire to worship God in accordance with its requirements, are to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Hence, in the teaching of Christ, and in the preaching and practice of the apostles, we find not only a direct contrast to all the absurd rites and superstitious practices of Heathen nations, but even a striking dissimilarity to the

ceremonial ritual of Moses. In the Gospel dispensation, it appears as if the presence of Christ, our Great High Priest, and the sacrificial offering of His death, had consecrated this wide world a temple of God, and brought every penitent and believing soul into happy intercourse with Jehovah ; whilst the true ministers of Christ, having themselves obtained " like precious faith," and preaching the Gospel, aided by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, instruct their hearers in the knowledge of God, and guide their feet into the way of peace.

Where these doctrines were proclaimed by the Christian preacher, (as was universally the case in the primitive churches, while favoured with an apostolic ministry,) the results were happy beyond all description. Sinners were converted to God, and built up into a holy and living temple unto the Lord. Had the members of the church been faithful to their high calling, and, living in this spirit, continued their efforts to extend the blessings of the Gospel to their fellow-men, there is reason to believe that idolatry and Pagan error would long ago have been banished from our earth, and the world have been filled with the knowledge of the truth and power of God.

When we read of the early triumphs of the Cross, how Heathenism was subdued, and Christianity was extended among different nations, we naturally imagine that this was unmixed success, and that the pure Gospel, in all its simplicity and saving power, did thus actually progress. The scenes of trouble and persecution which the first centuries disclose, by preventing us from scrutinizing the real character of the church, and from looking into its internal economy as fully as we might otherwise do, strengthen these impressions ; and we swim downward on the stream of time, exulting in the conquests of the Cross, until the period when persecution hid its horrid head, and imperial power consented to do homage unto the truth, and science and literature consecrated their genius to the ornament, defence, and exhibition of our holy religion. Then we have the means of seeing what has been actually accomplished, and of estimating the real state of the Christian church.

But when the condition of Christianity at the close of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century is examined, what feelings are created in a truly pious mind? We see, it is true, the religion of Christ almost everywhere acknowledged. Throughout what had been the great Roman empire, Heathenism is seen in ruins; and Christian churches and ministers everywhere abound. Yet, when their doctrines are tested by the word of God, and their practice by that of the apostles, what an awful falling off is seen! Satan, defeated without, became an insidious, but powerful, enemy within. Opinions, usages, and ceremonies are found to have been transferred from Heathenism into the bosom of the church; so that charity herself hesitates to call their assemblies Christian, though met in the name of Christ, and professing to be guided by His truth.

In prosecuting this melancholy task, it will be necessary for us to confine our attention to a few important points, our limits preventing the possibility of an extended investigation of the subject. Yet as impressions in favour of the perfect purity of the church in the first centuries are very general and strong, it will not be out of place to observe, that, whatever may be the opinions of persons who have not examined this subject, or however the results of our inquiry may defeat the object and destroy the hopes of those who instruct us to place unlimited confidence in the teaching and practice of the church in this age, holy Scripture in various important passages rather suggests doubt on this point, than encourages confidence. The inspired writers clearly indicate the existence of errors, which required all the wisdom with which they were endued to detect and expose, and all the power with which they were invested to suppress. Some of these are even particularly specified; and to the scriptural account of them we shall hereafter have occasion to refer. At present we only call attention to the important fact, that these prophetic communications do not teach us to expect the full development of the Gospel scheme, its universal promulgation and establishment in the world, before these errors should be introduced. The apostles

do not exhibit to us a pure church advancing through successive centuries unalloyed by evil : on the contrary, Paul declared, even in his day, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work ;" a declaration which prepares us for the results of its unhallowed operations in an early age.

The first error which we shall notice as having been introduced into the Christian church at a very early period, is the doctrine that great merit and virtue arose from a life of religious celibacy. We have already referred to the origin of monastic institutions ; but in the brief notice given of the circumstances which led to their formation and general adoption, the religious character and tendency of the opinions on which they were founded are scarcely mentioned. It is of this we now intend to speak.

The Scriptures evidently give no countenance to this notion. They exhibit the religion of Christ as perfectly adapted to man in all the various pursuits of life. Paul, indeed, writes as if a bishop ought to be a married man, and as if a proper discharge of family duties afforded the best guarantee of his qualification for governing the church. The same course of remark is applied to the domestic circle of a deacon ; the proper government of children is spoken of as affording a fine opportunity for the display of Christian principle. Yet, notwithstanding the application of Christianity to the spiritual condition of married persons, and its power to save and sanctify the human heart, even while sustaining the different relations of life ; and although the apostle had prophetically announced "the forbidding to marry" as a part of the teaching of those who depart from the faith, and inculcate the doctrines of devils ; the early Fathers speak constantly of marriage as involving some measure of spiritual defilement, and of the virgin state as conferring, from its very nature, an extraordinary measure of purity.

In proof of this, we may refer briefly to extracts from some of the most eminent of the Fathers. Speaking of the virgins dedicated to Christ, Tertullian says, "Thus have they now anticipated that eternal good which is the gift of the Lord ; and thus, while on earth, in not marrying, they are reckoned

as belonging to the ANGELIC HOUSEHOLD. By using the example of women such as these, you will incite in yourself an emulation of their continence, and by the spiritual taste break down carnal affections, freeing your soul from the stains of the transitory desires belonging to youth and beauty, by the thought of the recompence of immortal benefits." And again: "The command, 'Increase and multiply,' is abolished. Yet, as I think, (contrary to the Gnostic opinion,) this command, in the first instance, and now the removal of it, are from one and the same God; who then, and in that early seed-time of the human race, gave the reins to the marrying principle, until the world should be replenished, and until He had prepared the elements of a new scheme of discipline. But now, in this conclusion of the ages, He restrains what once He had let loose, and revokes what He had permitted. The same reason governs the continuance, at first, of that which is to prepare for the future. In a thousand instances indulgence is granted to the beginnings of things. So it is that a man plants a wood, and allows it to grow, intending in due time to use the axe. The wood, then, is the old dispensation, which is done away by the Gospel, in which the axe is laid at the root of the tree."

Thus, regardless either of our blessed Saviour's re-announcement of the primitive law: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;" or of Paul's assertion of the apostolic liberty to "lead about a wife;" or of his injunction, that ministers of religion should be husbands; we find Tertullian branding the marriage state as, in some measure at least, sinful, and substituting, for genuine Christian virtue, an outward, artificial, and unnatural institute, a form of godliness, while the substance is forgotten. Hence he asserts, that a high degree of spiritual purity attaches to the virgin state; saying to a married female, "May it not suffice thee to have fallen from that high rank of immaculate virginity, by once marrying, and so descending to a second stage of honour? Must thou fall yet further, even to a third or fourth?"

Nor are these pernicious views confined to one writer of the ancient church. Chrysostom, who wrote nearly two centuries after Tertullian, says, "Alas, my soul! well may I so exclaim, and repeat the lamentable cry, with the prophet: Alas, my soul! our virginity has fallen into contempt; the veil that parted it from matrimony is rent by impudent hands; the holy of holies is trodden under foot, and its grave and tremendous sanctities have become profane, and are thrown open to all; and that which once was had in reverence, as far more excellent than matrimony, is now sunk so low, that one would rather call the married blessed, than those who profess it. Nor is it the enemy that has effected all this, but the virgins themselves." *

But it may perhaps be thought that, although this ascetic principle does not appear to be countenanced by Scripture, nor to be warranted by sound reason, it nevertheless originated in well-intentioned zeal, and in its practical operation contributed to the well-being of the church. Both these surmises are, however, completely refuted by painful matter of fact. These opinions concerning celibacy took their rise at a very early period in the history of the church. Justin Martyr, in his second Apology, (written about A.D. 163,) states that there were then living persons who, although sixty or seventy years of age, had maintained themselves unmarried and inviolate. Yet we have abundant evidence that the origin and progress of these dogmas were greatly affected and influenced by the superstitions of the Heathen. On this point the testimony of Tertullian is explicit. "Among the Heathen," he declares, "a strictness of discipline in this respect is observed, to which ours do not submit. But these restraints the devil imposes on his servants, and is obeyed; and hereby stimulates the servants of God to reach an equal virtue. The priests of Gehenna retain their continence: for the devil knows how to destroy men, even in the practice of the virtues; and he cares not, so that he does but slay them, whether it be by the indulgence of the flesh, or by mortifying it." From this Father it

* TAYLOR'S "Ancient Christianity," vol. i., pp. 90, 92, 298.

appears evident, that the church envied the demons worshipped by Pagans, their vestal virgins, and unmarried priests ; and, struggling to attain an "equal virtue," they laid the same absurd yoke on the consciences of young members of Christian assemblies.

Nor does the practical operation of this principle exhibit a brighter aspect. It is, indeed, painful to refer to evidence in proof of this. Yet, what can we expect, when the awful sanctions of a holy religion, instead of being applied to enforce obedience to revealed truth, are perverted to maintain a war with human nature, and to establish an external and factitious virtue? By the influence of this notion, numbers of professing Christians of both sexes were induced to abjure marriage, and profess a life of celibacy. Yet, while doing so, their conduct was liable to great exception. And Cyprian, having been written to on the subject, returned this answer : " Concerning those who, after having solemnly devoted themselves to continence, have been found cohabiting with men, yet professing themselves inviolate, you have desired my advice. You well know that we do not recede from the apostolic traditions.....Wherefore it is by no means to be allowed that young women should live with men. If, indeed, they have cordially dedicated themselves to Christ, let them modestly, and chastely, and without subterfuge, hold to their purpose, and thus, constant and firm, look for the reward of virginity. But if, in fact, they will not so persevere, let them marry."

"Take," says an eloquent writer on this subject, after giving the above extract ; "Take your Cyprian from the shelf, and tell me whether the passages and the expressions I have omitted, do not make it certain, that this pretended apostolic institution, namely, religious celibacy, or, as it was called, 'espousals to Christ,' had already, and even amidst the fires of persecution, become the occasion, in a very extensive degree, to licentious practices, which must have been fatal to all piety, as well as frightful in themselves." *

* "Ancient Christianity," vol. i., p. 72.

Abundant evidence might be given on this point ; but it is unnecessary. With one additional observation we will pass from this branch of the subject. This ascetic mania would have wrought sufficient mischief to the church under any circumstances ; but its actual operation produced the most frightful evils. When it came to be generally admitted that a superior measure of spiritual purity attached

the virgin state, it naturally followed that ministers were brought immediately under the influence of this principle. Hence, as it was in itself a perversion of truth, and naturally tended to produce dissoluteness of manners, these evils were at once introduced into the highest quarters of the Christian church. Thus the very fountain of instruction was tainted with corruption.

“If all,” says Cyprian, when speaking on this subject, “are bound to observe a necessary discipline, how much more are those bound to do so, who should afford an example to others ! How shall they, the clergy, be guides in the path of piety and virtue, if, in fact, from them proceeds a contaminating warranty of vice ?”

Here, then, we are bold to say, is one error, which was introduced into the church at a very early period ; an error as contrary to right reason as to Scripture truth, and as general in its influence as it was pernicious in its operation.

The next point to which special attention is called, is the important fact, that the church during this period allowed and practised the direct invocation of saints and martyrs, and showed an idolatrous veneration for their symbols and relics. This, it is well known, is one of the gravest charges which have been brought against Popery ; yet it must be acknowledged that the evil consists in the thing itself, and not merely in the circumstance of its connexion with any particular system.

Mankind have in every age manifested a general tendency to regard with superstitious reverence those of their deceased fellow-men who during their life-time were eminently great or good. We will not stay to investigate the causes of this disposition : the fact is certain. Its results meet us

in every part of the ancient world, enter largely into the mythological systems of the Heathen, and have contributed to rear up, and to bring into general use, idolatry, with all its profaneness, obscenity, and bloodshed.

“To this strong tendency of human nature, the patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the prophetic dispensations opposed a stern, animated, uncompromising front of prohibition. The ancient revelation was, in one word, a testimony against demon-worship, against superstition, and against every one of its specious pretexts.”* In the early ages of the Jewish commonwealth, it must be confessed that divine revelation and divine interposition were together unequal to counteract this depraved inclination of the human heart. Yet at length the great lesson was learned; and the Jews, in the latter period of their national history, entered thoroughly into the spirit of the law, considered as a witness against idolatry.

Christianity, therefore, arose among a people saved from this error, and was propagated by agents who had no predilection for this delusion. But when its triumphs extended into Heathen nations, it had to encounter the full tide of this disposition to demonolatry. We might, indeed, have thought, that the superior light and power which accompanied the revelations of Gospel truth, would fully counteract, not only this, but every other, superstitious feeling of the human breast. This they undoubtedly did, when received in simplicity of heart, and with entire submission to the divine will. But when Christian teachers—looking away from the great fact that the Gospel was the dispensation of the Spirit, and derived its power from the perfection of its truth, and the mighty spiritual influence which accompanied its ministrations—became anxious to exhibit it, not only as it was revealed in the Scriptures, but as offering advantages and gratifications far superior to those of Heathenism; when for this purpose Heathen authors were studied, and Heathen rites and observances, under other names and associations, were transferred to the church; then the falsity of

* “Ancient Christianity,” vol. ii., p. 148.

which we are speaking arose in all its evil influence, and ultimately introduced actual idolatry into the sacred assemblies of those who were called after the name of Christ.

It must not be supposed that this consummation of evil was the immediate consequence of the introduction of error. Satan proceeds slowly in some of his mightiest efforts, that he may the more certainly attain his object. At first, what appeared to be a laudable appreciation of great piety, and especially of the zeal and sufferings of martyrs, was cultivated. Then the days on which such persons died were annually observed. Some religious ceremonies followed in connexion with those seasons. At last, saints and martyrs were regarded with superstitious and idolatrous veneration, and prayers and adorations were addressed to them, as was customary with the Heathen to demon-gods.

We are aware that, notwithstanding the awful example which the church of Rome supplies, most persons will be disposed to doubt the existence of such an error, at this early date in the history of the church. A brief selection from the evidence which the subject affords, will dissipate this agreeable incredulity, and establish the melancholy facts which have been just stated.

It may be here observed, that the polytheism which the wisest and best of the Heathens entertained, did not so much consist in an ignorance of, or disbelief in, the one true God, as in the idea of subordinate deities, and the notion of their existence and interposition. "Polytheism, involving, of course, a belief in the existence of subordinate invisible powers, may be defined as a reverential regard toward, and a habit of applying to, such beings for help, succour, and favour. Idolatry is polytheism, definitively associated, in its expressions and rites, with certain visible and tangible symbols or representations of those invisible guardians.

"Polytheism may exist, and has in some instances existed, apart from idolatry, which is its form or accident. Nevertheless, the constitution of the human mind tends so directly to bring about a connexion between the objects of a fond imaginative belief, and some visible types of those objects,

that a purely intellectual polytheism has ever been rare; and never, when it appears, can it be regarded as any thing else than a transition from the abstract to the sensible. It need hardly be said that, even in its utmost intellectual or abstract stage, polytheism excludes the genuine and spiritual communion of the soul with the one and true God."*

Plato, the most competent judge and the best writer among the Heathen on religious and philosophical subjects, says, "Every demon is a middle between God and mortal man." And again: "God is not approached by man; but all the commerce and intercourse between gods and men is by the mediation of demons. The demons," he adds, "are interpreters and conveyers from men to the gods, and from the gods to men, of the supplications and sacrifices on the one part, and of the commands and rewards of sacrifices on the other." Apuleius, a later philosopher, gives a similar account: "Demons are middle powers, by whom both our desires and deserts pass unto the gods. They are carriers between men on earth and the gods in heaven; hence of prayers, thence of gifts. They convey to and fro; hence petitions, thence supplies. Or they are interpreters on both sides, and bearers of salutation; for it would not be for the majesty of the celestial gods to take care of those things." The same writer has given us a summary of the entire doctrine in these words: "All things are done by the will, power, and authority of the celestial gods; but by the obedience, service, and ministry of the demons."

Of these demons two classes were supposed to exist. The one consisted of the souls of men deified, or canonized, after death. Hence Hesiod, describing the happy race of men who lived in the golden age, says:—

"When earth's dark breast had closed this race around,
Great Jove, as demons, raised them from the ground.
Earth-hovering spirits, they their charge began,
The ministers of good, and guards of man.
Mantled with mist of darkling air they glide,
And compass earth, and pass on every side;

* "Ancient Christianity," vol. ii., p. 214.

And mark, with earnest vigilance of eyes,
Where just deeds live, or crooked wrongs arise ;
And shower the wealth of seasons from above,
Their kingly office, delegate from Jove." *

Plato concurs with Hesiod ; and asserts that " he and many other poets speak excellently, who affirm that when good men die, they attain great honour and dignity, and become demons." And again : " All those who die valiantly in war, are of Hesiod's golden generation, and are made demons ; and we ought for ever afterwards to serve and adore their sepulchres, as the sepulchres of demons. The same also we decree, whenever any of those that were judged excellently good in life, die either of old age or in any other manner."

The other class of demons was composed of such as had never dwelt in mortal bodies. Hence Apuleius says, " There is another and a higher kind of demons, who were always free from the encumbrances of the body ; and out of this higher order Plato supposeth that guardians were appointed unto men." Ammonius, in Plutarch, speaks of the same as "souls separated from bodies, or such as had never inhabited bodies at all." We see, therefore, that while one part of these Heathen doctrines appears to refer to the existence of angels, some knowledge of which might have been preserved by tradition from the earliest ages ; the other is strikingly analogous to what was afterward introduced into the church by the canonization of saints and martyrs.

It was necessary to give these extracts, not only for the purpose of showing what opinions were entertained by the Heathen, but also because the testimonies which we shall have to produce respecting the early introduction and prevalence of this error in the Christian church, will refer to some of the identical authorities whom we have adduced, and appear, in a certain measure, to depend upon them.

To prove the extensive progress of these erroneous views in the primitive church, reference must be made to several passages which occur in the early Fathers. Eusebius, who

* ELTON'S Translation of HESIOD'S "Works and Days," book i., 161.

was one of the most learned Christian writers of his time, and who lived during the reign of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, after quoting and approving the notions of Hesiod and Plato before cited concerning demons, adds: "These things are befitting upon the decease of the favourites of God, whom you may properly call 'the champions of true religion.' Whence it is our custom to assemble at their sepulchres, and to make our prayers at them, and to honour their blessed souls." Here, it will be observed, Eusebius compares saints and martyrs with the demons of the Gentiles, and esteems them worthy of the same honour. Anthony, one of the most celebrated founders of monastic institutions, gave it in charge to his monks, with his dying breath, to "take care to adhere to Christ in the first place, and then to the saints, that after death they may receive you, as friends and acquaintance, into the everlasting tabernacles." His advice was but too well followed. Hence we find the emperor Julian reproaching the Christians with adding "many new dead men to that ancient dead man, Jesus."

The Fathers generally of the fourth and fifth centuries promoted these opinions. Theodoret in particular, (A.D. 423,) having cited the same passages of Hesiod and Plato, reasons thus: "If, then, the poet hath called good men, after their decease, 'the deliverers and guardians of mortal men;' and the best philosopher hath confirmed the poet's saying, and asserted that we ought to serve and adore their sepulchres; why, I beseech you, sirs," (speaking to the Greeks,) "do you blame the things which are done by us? For such as were illustrious for piety, and for the sake thereof received martyrdom, we also name 'deliverers and physicians,' not calling them 'demons,' (let us not be so desperately mad!) but 'the friends and sincere servants of God.'"

Here Theodoret plainly allows the practice, and only disapproves of the name. Again, he says concerning martyrs, "They who are well pray for the continuance of health, and they who have been long sick pray for recovery. The barren

also pray for children, and they who are to make a long journey desire them to be their guides and companions in the way; not going to them as gods, but applying to them as divine men, and beseeching them to become intercessors for them with God." Nay, he declares that "the martyrs have blotted out of the minds of men the memory of those who were called gods. *For our Lord hath brought His dead into the place of your gods*, whom He hath utterly abolished, and hath given their honour to the martyrs: for, instead of the feasts of Jupiter and of Bacchus, are now celebrated the festivals of Peter, and Paul, and Thomas, and the other martyrs. Wherefore, seeing the advantage of honouring the martyrs, fly, O friends, from the error of the demons; and, using the martyrs as lights and guides, pursue the way that leadeth directly to God." * Here the doctrine of demons is evidently revived under another name, and the saints are substituted for the demons; the *divi*, or "deified men," of the Christians, occupying the place of the *divi*, or "deified men," of the Heathens.

In addition to all this, we call special attention to the evidence furnished by the writings of Chrysostom. Considering his learning, piety, and influence in the church, he may be fairly supposed to present the subject in its most favourable aspect.

A mother had plunged with her two daughters into a river; and thus, while "marrying them to Christ," she "baptized" them, and also obtained for them and for herself, as by force, the crown of martyrdom: a story, both in itself and in its principle, utterly to be reprobated! But whom the church had canonized the preacher must commend. In a discourse delivered at their shrine, Chrysostom, amid much of a similar kind, uses the following language: "You are inflamed, I warrant, with a passionate affection toward these saints! Let us, then, with this very fire of love, fall down before their relics. Let us embrace their shrines; for of truth the shrines of the martyrs are of great efficacy, even as the bones of the martyrs

* See Bishop NEWTON'S "Dissertations on the Prophecies," Diss. xxiii.

possess great force. And not only on this the day of the (martyrs') festival, but on other days also, let us beset them, let us beseech them, let us invoke them, that they would deign to become our patrons. For great confidence (boldness) have they, not living merely, but as dead; ay, much more as dead. For now they bear the stigmas (marks of martyrdom) of Christ; and while showing these stigmas, they are able to persuade the King to any thing. Since, then, their power is such, and such their favour with God, when we have, with a continued assiduity, and a perpetual frequenting of their society, (at their shrines,) made ourselves, as it were, their familiar friends, by their means we shall obtain for ourselves the loving-kindness of God." *

Again: the same Father, after refuting the infidel suggestions of his times, and repelling the supposition that the martyrs had suffered under a delusive persuasion, asks, "But if they were deceived, how has it come to pass that the demons are in terror at their dust? How is it that they have fled even from their sepulchres? This has not happened because the demons fear the dead (as such). For, see, myriads of dead strew the surface of the earth, and upon these the demons hold their seats: and how many demoniacs may one see dwelling in deserts, and making their homes among the tombs! But the moment when any bones of the martyrs are dug up, how do these take their flight, as from fire, or some intolerable torment, and in articulate sounds proclaim the virtue of these relics to inflict upon them a deep-felt chastisement!"

The common people, thus taught by their most eminent doctors to consider the visible relic as endowed with undefined powers of exciting terror in the adversary, as well as with kindly energies of guardianship and care for the benefit of the faithful, would hardly have a step to take in order to reach the last stage of a polytheistic dependence upon inferior deities, and of a belief in the indwelling virtue of the tangible image or picture. It was, in fact, toward this

* See "Ancient Christianity," vol. ii., pp. 194-198; from which we have also taken some of the following extracts and remarks.

visible and tangible symbol of the invisible divinity, that the preacher directed the eyes and souls of his hearers; as in a subsequent part of the same Homily: "O wonderful pyre! what a treasure does it contain! that dust and those ashes, more precious than any gold, more fragrant than any perfumes, more estimable than any jewels! For, that which no treasure or gold is able to effect, do the relics of the martyrs effect. When has gold ever dispelled disease? When has it ever put death to flight? *But the bones of the martyrs have done both*; that in the times of our ancestors, but this in our own."

And again, in "The Encomium of the Egyptian Martyrs:" "These, the bodies of the saints, better than any munitions of adamant, better than imperishable ramparts, wall about our city, and, like lofty precipices on this side and on that, defend us. Nor do they repel merely the assaults of visible enemies, or exclude the approach of evils cognizable by the senses; but (they exclude) also the machinations of invisible demons, and subvert and dissipate all the frauds of the devil; and they do this with as much ease as a robust man overthrows and prostrates the playthings of children. The defences, indeed, which human art provides, such as walls, ditches, arms, and numerous forces, and whatsoever is usually devised for the security of a city,—these all may be rendered of no avail by still greater and more copious means of attack. But when a city is walled about with the bodies of the saints, whatever countless treasures may have been expended, (in the ordinary means of war,) no equivalent devices can be brought against a state so defended. Nor, beloved, is it alone against the devices of men, nor alone against the malice and craft of demons, that this treasure avails us. For, if at any time the Lord of all, by the abounding of iniquity, be incensed against us, we may be able, by thrusting these bodies (of the saints) before us, immediately to render Him propitious to our city."

More might be cited from the same source; but it is unnecessary. We will, however, further show that we have not overrated the character and tendency of the error which

the preceding quotations so fully exhibit, by a reference to the sentiments of an early Christian writer, a zealous opponent of the worship of saints and images, which was then rapidly springing up around him, he being contemporary with Chrysostom. "Epiphanius complains of some Arabian Christians, who made a goddess of the blessed Virgin, and offered a cake to her as the Queen of heaven. He condemns their heresy as impious and abominable, and declares that upon these also is fulfilled that of the apostle, '*Some shall apostatize from the sound doctrine, giving heed to fables, and doctrines of demons.* For they shall be,' saith the apostle, 'worshippers of the dead, as in Israel also they were worshipped;' meaning the Baalim and Ashtaroth who were worshipped by the children of Israel." *

This judgment of an early Christian writer is of great importance: it not only explains the prophecy of the apostle as applying to "doctrines concerning demons," † or the worship of the dead; but it also, in the application of this language to the practices of the times, shows the opinion that was entertained respecting these fallacies by the contemporary Christians who were "sound in the faith."

We might add much to the remarks already made, especially on the subject of worship offered to the Virgin Mary, who in those times was addressed as the "Mother of God, the holy Queen of heaven," to whom prayers were abundantly preferred, and who was looked to as an efficient mediator with God. "No instance of divine honour paid to Mary is recorded of an earlier date than the fifth century. Cyril of Alexandria and Proclus of Constantinople were the first to pay these honours to her. Festivals to her memory began to be held about the year 431; but were not generally observed till the sixth century." ‡ Our limits, however, forbid further quotation; and we shall now pass from this branch of the subject, after adducing the following

* Bishop NEWTON's "Dissertations on the Prophecies," p. 479.

† Bishop NEWTON, in his "Dissertations on the Prophecies," contends for this, as the strict meaning of the original terms.

‡ COLEMAN's "Antiquities of the Church," p. 192, 8vo. edition.

brief evidence, which amply associates what has been advanced both with the church of Rome, and also with the precise time to which our attention is more particularly directed; namely, the time of the mission of Augustine to the Anglo-Saxons.

Gregory I.,—the same who wished in person to bring the Gospel to the Heathen Saxons of Britain, and who afterward sent Augustine on this mission,—on receiving from Recared, king of Spain, rich presents of gold and gems, presented to him in return some of the hairs of John the Baptist, a cross which enclosed a small piece of the wood of the cross on which Christ suffered, and a key that contained some particles of iron which had been scraped from the chains of Peter the apostle.* This same prelate sent to the empress Constantina a *brandeum*, or “veil,” which had touched the bodies of the apostles; and he assured her that miracles had been wrought by such relics. He promised her also some dust filings of the chains of the apostle Paul, of which relics he makes frequent mention in his epistles. Writing to Theodelinda, queen of the Lombards, he informs her that he sent her son, the young king, a little cross, in which was a particle of the wood of the true cross, to carry about his neck. Secundinus, a holy hermit near Ravenna, god-father to this young king, begged of the Pope some devout pictures. Gregory, in his answer, says, “We have sent you two cloths, containing the picture of God our Saviour, and of Mary the holy Mother of God, and of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and one cross; also, for a benediction, a key which hath been applied to the most holy body of St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, that you may remain defended from the enemy.” †

If this does not satisfactorily prove that error and superstition had at this time acquired an awful ascendancy in the church of Rome, we know not what amount of evidence will be deemed sufficient to establish the fact.

We proceed, in the next place, to notice the rise and pro-

* GIBBON'S “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,” vol. iv., p. 425.

† “Ancient Christianity,” vol. ii., p. 163.

gress of a superstitious regard for the sacraments, and of various gaudy and Heathenish additions which were made in the manner of their administration, during this period. This is a subject of extreme difficulty and delicacy, and one which we approach with deep seriousness of spirit.

It will not be necessary here to enter on any long explanation of the origin and divine appointment of baptism and the Lord's supper; but we shall take occasion to refer to some particulars respecting the nature and design of these sacraments, and the manner in which they were administered in apostolic times.

In the first place, then, it is evident, that in the Gospel scheme baptism and the Lord's supper are presented to us in a different aspect, and as occupying a different position, from any other rite or external observance: as, in the Old Testament, circumcision and propitiatory sacrifices were things of a distinct nature and order from all the other ritual precepts; for these, although given by divine command, were not federal acts by which the people renewed their covenant or obtained reconciliation with God. In the new dispensation, although our Saviour has delivered us from "the law of commandments contained in ordinances" that was laid upon the Jews; yet, since we are subject to the influence of sensible objects while we are in the body, He has appointed some federal actions to be both the visible marks of our profession of Christianity, and the medium through which spiritual blessings may be conveyed to us.

This view of the sacraments sufficiently shows their importance. They are both signs and seals of God's covenant of mercy with mankind through Christ Jesus. As signs, they contain a declaration of the same doctrines which the written word of God exhibits, but addressed by significant emblems to the senses. As seals or pledges, they confirm the same promises which are made to us by God in His word, and by His Spirit in our hearts. Thus these ordinances not only bring to mind God's merciful purpose towards us in Christ Jesus, but constantly assure us that those who believe in Him shall be, and are, made partakers of His grace.

Hence baptism—while it is the initiatory rite by which believers of all nations are to be introduced into the church and covenant of grace, recognising and adoring the triune Jehovah, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—evidently sets before us, by a visible emblem, the cleansing influences of the Holy Spirit; and while pledging us to trust wholly in Christ for pardon and salvation, to obey His laws, and to do whatsoever He has commanded us, it at the same time becomes a confirming seal that God will be faithful to all His covenant engagements. So in the case of the Lord's supper: as a sign, it exhibits the love of God to the world in giving His only-begotten Son for its redemption; the love of Christ, who freely suffered in our stead; the extreme nature of those sufferings, which were unto death; the vicarious and sacrificial character of that death, as a sin-offering and a propitiation, in virtue of which only a covenant of grace was entered into with man by the offended God; and, lastly, the benefits derived through believing, namely, the remission of sins, and the nourishment of the soul by vital union with Christ. While, as a seal, this sacrament is a constant assurance, on the part of God, of the continuance of His covenant of redemption, in full and undiminished force from age to age; it is also a pledge to every one who believes in Christ, and receives this sacrament in profession of his entire reliance upon the atonement, that God will graciously accept him.

If our main object had been a theological exposition of the character of the sacraments, several other important views of the subject would require particular notice. The preceding account will, however, convey some idea of the proper nature of these Christian ordinances, and at the same time show that we have no sympathy with the lax opinions which are frequently indulged on this momentous subject.

Yet it is evident, that, while these external rites were designed to serve the important spiritual objects which we have enumerated, nothing can be more simple and unostentatious than the manner of their primitive celebration. In baptism there was the simple application of water to the

subject of it, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And with regard to the Lord's supper, our Saviour, at the moment of His taking the last cup of the passover-feast, appointed the wine which it contained, with the bread used on that occasion, to be a standing memorial of His death. The primitive church, clearly perceiving that the frequent observance of this ordinance was obligatory upon them, commemorated the death of Christ at very short intervals, and thereby professed their faith in His blood, and their reliance on His covenant-mercy. There was no altar, no sacrifice, no priesthood: all harmonized with the plain, simple, and spiritual teaching and practice of our blessed Saviour.

But, in bringing our attention to the period when Gregory I. sent Augustine into Britain, what a mighty change do we see! a change so great, that, unless specially informed of the fact, no person would imagine that the sacraments of Gregory bore any relation to the baptism and Lord's supper of the apostles and of the primitive church.

It may not be possible, nor, if it were so, would it be necessary, to trace the rise and progress of these errors and changes. Instead, we will make a slight reference to the terms in which the ordinance of the Lord's supper is spoken of by successive Fathers, and then endeavour to give some idea of the mode of its celebration in the time of Gregory.

Justin Martyr is the first of the Fathers who makes particular mention of the manner in which the sacraments were celebrated. He says, alluding to the previously-performed rite of baptism, "We, then, after having so washed him who hath expressed his conviction and professes the faith, lead him to those who are called 'brethren,' where they are gathered together, to make common prayers with great earnestness, both for themselves, and for him who is now enlightened, and for all other in all places, that, having learned the truth, we may be deemed worthy to be found men of godly conversation in our lives, and to keep the commandments, that so we may attain to eternal salvation. When we have finished our prayers, we salute one another

with a kiss. After which there is brought, to that one of the brethren that presides, bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he, having received them, gives praise and glory to the Father of all things, through the name of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and gives thanks in many words for that God hath vouchsafed to them these things. When he hath finished his praises and thanksgiving, all the people who are present express their assent, saying, *Amen!* which in the Hebrew tongue implies, 'So be it.' The president having given thanks, and the people having expressed their assent, those whom we call 'deacons' give to each of those who are present a portion of the bread which hath been blessed, and of the wine mixed with water; and carry some away for those who are absent."*

From this passage it appears, that, when Justin wrote, (about A.D. 150,) the eucharist was celebrated with much of its primitive simplicity, and that no superstitious opinions or practices had as yet been associated with its observance. Baptism was not then celebrated in the public assemblies of Christians, but in a place specially appropriated for the purpose. "At first it was usual for all who laboured in the propagation of the Gospel to be present; and it was also customary that the converts should be baptized and received into the church by those under whose ministry they had embraced the Christian doctrine; but this custom was soon changed, and the right of baptizing vested in the bishop alone. This right he sometimes conferred on presbyters and country bishops."†

"During the third century some changes took place in the administration of both sacraments. Baptism was still conducted in a simple form; but several additions began to be made to it. The usual ceremonies attendant upon its celebration were, questions and replies made in a prescribed phrase, fasting, watching, anointing, the kiss, the offering of milk and honey, and the sealing. A more solemn season,

* JUSTINI MARTYRIS *Apologia*, sect. lxxxv.

† MOSHEIM'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 129. 8vo. London, 1828.

likewise, was appointed for baptism, namely, at Easter and Whitsuntide, which was continued during a whole week, on account of the great numbers to be baptized. The administration of the eucharist also remained simple, although in this likewise some changes had taken place." *

On this point Du Pin candidly admits that "the mass," as he calls the Lord's supper, "was performed in those primitive ages with great simplicity and without much ceremony; and that they used but few prayers; but by little and little others were added, and several visible ceremonies were annexed, to render the service more venerable to the people. In fine, the churches afterwards regulated, and committed to writing, the manner of celebrating it; and this is what they call 'liturgies;' which, being compiled conformably to the various customs of divers places, are likewise found to be different. And forasmuch as men are naturally inclined to make some alterations in their exterior habit, many things from time to time have been successively added to them." This single remark is sufficient to show, that the liturgies that bear the name of the apostles or evangelists were not actually composed by them.†

In the fourth century Christianity, released from persecution and favoured by Constantine, rose rapidly in popular estimation. At the same time error with increasing energy invaded the church, and many false doctrines and various Heathenish practices were introduced.

With respect to doctrine, it is evident that, long before the end of the fifth century, sentiments were promulgated and received on the subject of baptismal efficacy, which went far beyond the letter and meaning of holy Scripture. It was currently taught, that the effect of this ordinance was the certain salvation of the soul; an opinion which, considering that the subjects of baptism were mostly adults, not only tended to destroy the great doctrine of justification by faith, but also contributed to pervert the Gospel by clouding its richest privileges, and exhibiting a kind of Christianity

* SPANHEIM'S "Annals," p. 270.

† DU PIN'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 8. Fol. London, 1692.

which might exist without any personal experience of the favour of God, without any conscious union with Christ, or power over sin.

To prove that this was the case, we need only refer to the appellations given to this sacrament. It was called *indulgentia*, "indulgence," or "absolution." In the African council under Cyprian it was termed "the divine indulgence." In a Roman council cited by Cotelierius, it is decreed that "at the Easter festival remission of sins," meaning baptism, "may be administered by either presbyter or deacon, in the presence of the bishop in the parish churches." This rite was also denominated *παλιγγενεσία*, "regeneration," and *χρίσμα*, "unction." As every Christian was supposed to be born again by the operation of the waters of baptism, these terms were in frequent use. Hence, in Cyril's Catechism, baptism is called "the regeneration of the soul;" and in a similar sense it was termed by Justin Martyr "the water of life." As the divine operations of the Holy Spirit are in Scripture called "the unction or anointing of the Spirit;" so baptism had the name of "chrism" or "unction" given to it.

Baptism was also called *φωτισμός*, "illumination," from its supposed effect in enlightening men's minds. The term is thus used by Chrysostom, Nazianzen, and others. Justin Martyr, also, speaking on this subject, says, "This laver is called 'illumination.'" Another word used to designate this sacrament was *salus*, "salvation." This name was applied to baptism in the belief, that it was not only the ordinary means of obtaining remission of sins, but also of bringing men, by the grace of Christ, to the glory of the kingdom of heaven. Hence Austin observes, "that it was common for the African Christians to call baptism by the name of 'salvation.'"*

It is very probable that this language at first arose from the gracious visitations with which the great Head of the church was pleased to crown this ordinance, when dispensed

* BINGHAM'S "Christian Antiquities," book xi., chap. i., sect. 1-6.

by truly godly ministers to sincere penitents; who, while thus making a public profession of their devotedness to Christ, were, by faith in Him, blessed with a personal experience of His saving grace. Yet it is manifest, that these terms were afterward employed with so little reference to the personal character of the parties, that a necessary connexion between the administration of the rite and the communication of saving grace, was thought to be implied in them. Hence Isidore of Damietta says, "The baptism of infants doth not only wash them from their natural pollution, caused by the sin of Adam, but it also confers graces; it not only obliterates the sin of those that receive it, but also makes them God's adopted children."* And Gaudentius observes, that "the water of baptism quenches hell-fire." Gennadius declares, "that no unbaptized person can be saved, and therefore that catechumens obtain not eternal life, unless they have suffered martyrdom." Pacianus, who flourished in the fourth century, is of the same mind; and states, that this regeneration cannot be perfected but by the sacrament of baptism, and unction, and the ministry of the priests. "For," says he, "baptism purifies from sins, and unction brings down the Holy Spirit; and both the one and the other are applied by the hand and the mouth of the bishop; the whole man is born again and renewed in Jesus Christ." And Cyril of Jerusalem: "The baptism of Jesus Christ does not only remit sins, but also fills the soul with the gifts of the Holy Spirit."† There can be little doubt that this doctrine had a great influence in leading persons to defer baptism till just before their death. The certainty of baptism to procure pardon and regeneration naturally recommended this line of conduct, which was adopted by Constantine the Great, and many others.‡ In consequence of their being in such a weak state as to be compelled to *recline* on their

* DU PIN, vol. iv., p. 6; where the Catholic author observes, that the Father speaks "in a manner altogether conformable to the doctrine of the present (Roman) church."

† *Idem*, vol. iv., p. 186; vol. ii., p. 113; vol. v., p. 73.

‡ BINGHAM'S "Christian Antiquities," vol. iii., p. 275.

couches when they received this rite, this mode of administration received the title of *clinical* baptism.

We now direct attention to various rites and ceremonies, which were from time to time introduced in connexion with this sacrament.

As a preliminary step to baptism, a regular series of instruction was given to adult candidates. To this instruction it is not necessary particularly to refer. But the appointment of catechumens was made the means of introducing a striking conformity to Heathenish customs, which requires a short explanation. It is well known that the Heathen concealed from the uninitiated various parts of their worship, which were called *μυστήρια*, "mysteries." Nothing is more evident than that the religion of Christ and His apostles was perfectly free from every thing of this sort, and was preserved so by the church until after the time of Justin Martyr. Yet in the third century Tertullian observes, that "there was a secrecy and silence observed in all mysteries;" and he blames the heretics of his own times for not practising some discipline of this kind. "They make no distinction," he says, "between believers and catechumens; they all meet together, they all hear together, they all pray together." From these words, it is plain, that those who assumed to themselves the title of "the orthodox," or of "the church," had at this period made several distinctions between catechumens and believers.* Hence Basil says, "Baptism, the eucharist, and the oil of chrism, are things that the uninitiated are not allowed to look upon." And St. Austin, putting the question, "What things are kept secret, and not made public in the church?" answers, "The sacrament of baptism, and the sacrament of the eucharist; for even Pagans may see our good works, but the sacraments are kept hidden from them." "We do not speak openly," says Cyril, "of the sacraments before the catechumens, but deliver many things covertly, that the faithful, who know them, may understand us, and they who know them not may receive no harm."†

* BINGHAM'S "Christian Antiquities," book x., chap. v., sect. 3.

† *Idem*, sect. 4.

Thus were the great truths of the Gospel obscured, and the practices of the Heathen followed by the church.

Another part of the preparation for baptism was the covenant or vow. "A subscription to the creed was required at baptism, accompanied with a seal. The whole transaction was regarded as a most solemn covenant on the part of the person baptized, by which he publicly, and with many impressive formalities, renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil. Ambrose calls it 'a promise, a caution, a hand-writing, a bond, given to God, and registered in the court of heaven, because it was made before His ministers and the angels, who are witnesses to it.' Many others speak of it in terms of similar import." *

To this was added exorcism, of which we hear nothing before the second century. Even in the fourth it is spoken of, not as being absolutely necessary, or as being enjoined by the Scriptures, but as highly beneficial, inasmuch as without it children born of Christian parents would not be free from the influence of evil spirits.† It was, however, made obligatory by the second council of Bracara, held A.D. 572; the first canon of which ordains that the bishops admonish the clergy "to use exorcisms to the catechumens for the space of twenty days before their baptism."‡ The ceremonies generally observed in this rite were, preliminary fasting, prayers, and genuflections; imposition of hands on the head of the candidate; putting off the shoes and clothing, with the exception of an under garment; placing the candidate with his face toward the West, as the symbol of darkness; and a renunciation of Satan and his works. The exorcist then breathed upon the candidate, either once or three times, and adjured the unclean spirit, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to come out of him.§ Next followed the signing with the sign of the cross, the minister saying, "Receive thou the sign of the cross on thy

* COLEMAN'S "Christian Antiquities," p. 124.

† *Ibid.*

‡ DU PIN, vol. v., p. 151.

§ See BINGHAM, vol. iii., p. 20; and DU PIN, vol. ii., p. 109.

forehead and on thy heart.”* After this the candidate was anointed with oil; and salt, milk, and honey, as emblems of spiritual things, were generally administered.

These preliminaries having been observed, “‘While the priests are finishing the unction,’ says Dionysius, ‘the bishop comes to the mother of adoption,’ so he calls the font, ‘and by invocation sanctifies the water in it, thrice pouring in some of the holy chrism in a manner representing the sign of the cross.’ This invocation or consecration of the water by prayer is mentioned by Tertullian. For he says, ‘The waters are made the sacrament of sanctification by invocation of God. The Spirit immediately descends from heaven, and, resting upon them, sanctifies them by Himself, *and they, being so sanctified, imbibe the power of sanctifying.*’ And Cyprian declares, that ‘the water must be first cleansed and sanctified by the priest, that it may have power by baptism to wash away the sins of man.’ And the whole council of Carthage at this time says, ‘The water is sanctified by the prayer of the priest to wash away sin.’”† In the course of this ceremony the water “was signed with the cross of Christ.” And as to the effect of this consecration, “the very same change was supposed to be wrought in the waters of baptism, as by the consecration of bread and wine in the eucharist. For they supposed not only the presence of the Spirit, but also the mystical presence of Christ’s blood, to be here after consecration. Julius Firmicus, speaking of baptism, bids men here ‘seek for the pure waters, the undefiled fountain, where the blood of Christ, after many spots and defilements, would whiten them by the Holy Ghost.’ Prosper is bold to say, that ‘in baptism we are dipped in blood;’ and Jerome uses the same bold metaphor, explaining those words of Isaiah, ‘Wash ye, make you clean,’ by, ‘Be ye baptized in My blood by the laver of regeneration.’”‡

* “This form of exorcism was in use in the fourth century, and this mode of signing the cross in the time of Gregory the Great.”—COLEMAN’S “Christian Antiquities,” p. 124.

† BINGHAM’S “Christian Antiquities,” book xi., chap. x., sect. 1.

‡ *Ibid.*, sect. 4, where may be seen numerous other testimonies to the same effect.

Immediately after the consecration the baptism took place, which was generally by immersion. After this followed the kiss of peace, the chrism, or second anointing, the arraying of the baptized in white garments, and the placing in their hands lighted tapers. Being thus admitted into the family of God, they were permitted publicly for the first time to use the Lord's Prayer, addressing Him as "Our Father," and to partake of the communion. The chrism, or second anointing, is the only one of these several particulars on which we stay to remark. To this, great importance was attached; and here again the sign of the cross was used. Hence Tertullian, speaking on this subject, says, "The flesh is washed, that the soul may be cleansed; the flesh is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated; the flesh is signed, that the soul may be guarded; the flesh is overspread with the imposition of hands, that the soul may be illuminated by the Spirit." * And Cyril of Jerusalem says, "As the bread of the eucharist, after the invocation of the Holy Spirit, is no more common bread, but the body of Jesus Christ; so the holy chrism, after consecration, is no more common oil, but it is a gift of the Holy Spirit, which has the virtue to procure the presence of the Divinity. So, while the forehead and other parts of the body are anointed with this visible oil, the soul is sanctified by this holy and quickening Spirit." † The similarity which these opinions and practices bore to the mysteries and incantations of the Heathen is sufficiently apparent. Hence Tertullian says, "The devil apes the ceremonies of the divine sacraments in his idol mysteries. He baptizes those that believe in him; he promises them expiation of sins in his laver, as now it is in the mysteries of Mithra; he signs his soldiers in the forehead." ‡ This passage contains ample proof that Christian rites greatly resembled Heathen ceremonies. As the latter were not only in use, but had attained their utmost pitch of refinement, long before the introduction of Christianity, and especially as it is positive that the ceremonies

* BINGHAM, book xi., chap. ix., sect. 6.

† DU PIN, vol. ii., p. 113.

‡ BINGHAM'S "Christian Antiquities," book xi., chap. ix., sect. 6.

which we have enumerated as used in baptism in later ages, were unknown in apostolic times ; there can be no reasonable doubt that this similarity was occasioned by the introduction of new and cumbrous forms in connexion with the simple ordinances of Christ. These rites might be considered appropriate and significant, and calculated to recommend the Gospel to the attention and respect of the Heathen ; but their practical operation was to adulterate the truth, and to conceal and pervert its spiritual efficacy, by the introduction of a great number of superstitious ceremonies.

The doctrines and observances connected with the Lord's supper exhibit a similar declension. The earliest Christian writers and apologists scarcely allude to this ordinance. Justin Martyr, in an extract already given, affords the first information we possess on this subject subsequent to the time of the apostles. Irenæus, about A.D. 200, brought into use the terms " oblation " and " sacrifice," in reference to this ordinance : in opposition to the Gnostics, who asserted that all sacrifices had ceased, this Father contended that the eucharist should be regarded as a sacrifice. This appears to be the first opening of the flood-gate through which, in the following centuries, the church was deluged with error. Clement of Alexandria and Origen followed in the same course, using expressions which, although correct in a spiritual sense, were very capable of misapplication. The last of these two Fathers appears to have been the first who recommended a very reverential regard for the elements after consecration. He says, " You who frequent our sacred mysteries know, that when you receive the body of the Lord, you take care, with all due caution and veneration, that not even the smallest particle of the consecrated gift should fall to the ground and be wasted. If, through inattention, any part thus fall, you justly account yourself guilty. If, then, with good reason, you use so much caution in preserving His body, how can you esteem it a lighter sin to slight the word of God than to neglect His body ? "

Toward the close of the third century, Cyril of Jerusalem uses yet stronger language, stating that they prayed unto

God, "that He would send down the Holy Spirit upon those things that we offer unto Him, and that He would make the bread become the body of Jesus Christ, and the wine His blood." He adds afterward: "Now when this spiritual sacrifice is ended, and this unbloody worship which is given to God by means of the expiatory victim is concluded," &c. And, further: "Now when you approach to communicate, you must not come there with your hands expanded, nor your fingers open; but, supporting your right hand, which is to support so great a King, with your left, you receive the body of Jesus Christ into the hollow of this hand, saying, 'Amen.'"

Ambrose, also, arguing in support of this mysterious change, says, "A virgin brought forth. This is against the order of nature. The body which we consecrate came forth of a virgin. Why do you seek for the order of nature in the body of Jesus Christ, since Jesus Christ was born of a virgin contrary to the order of nature? Jesus Christ had real flesh, which was fastened to the cross, and laid in the sepulchre. So the eucharist is the true sacrament of His flesh." This teaching would make every celebration of the Lord's supper as great a mystery and miracle as the actual incarnation of Christ. To the same effect speaks Gaudentius, in allusion to the paschal lamb of the Jews; which, he reminds them, was but a figure, and not the real thing. He says, "It is the same Lamb dead for all, which, being offered in all churches, nourishes, under the mystery of bread and wine, those that offer it. This is the flesh of the Lamb, this is His blood. It is the same Creator of all things, who, having made bread out of the earth, forms His body of this bread. He who formerly changed water into wine, now changes wine into His blood."*

Jerome, Isidore, Nilus, and several other Fathers, might be adduced, using similar language; but we only add one passage from Chrysostom: "I do not enjoin thee to fast,

* DU PIN, vol. ii., pp. 114, 214; vol. iii., p. 60. See also GREGORY NYSSEN, quoted to the same effect in BINGHAM's "Christian Antiquities," vol. v., p. 358.

but to abstain from luxury, and all the effects of it, immoderate laughter, disorderly words, pernicious jesting, foolish and vain discourse, and whatever a Christian ought not to speak, who has been entertained at Christ's table, and touched His flesh with his tongue. Whoever thou art, therefore, purify thy hands, thy lips, and thy tongue, which have been the gates at which Christ entered into thee. Be grateful to thy benefactor by an excellent conversation; consider the greatness of the sacrifice, and let that engage thee to adorn every member of thy body. Consider what thou takest in thy hand, and never after endure to strike any man: do not disgrace that hand by the sin of fighting and quarrelling, which has been honoured with the reception of so great a gift. Consider what thou takest in thy hand, and keep thy hand free from all robbery and injustice. Think again, how thou not only receivest it in thy hand, but puttest it to thy month; and keep thy tongue from all filthy and contumelious speech, from blasphemy and perjury, and all words of the like nature. For it is a most pernicious thing that the tongue, which ministers in such tremendous mysteries, and is dyed with the purple of such precious blood, and made a golden sword, should be put to the vile practice of railing, and reviling, and scurrilous and abusive language."*

While these passages are given for the purpose of demonstrating the progress of error on this subject among the early Fathers, it must not be supposed that they all used such language. It would be easy, from writers of the same age, to furnish an ample antidote to the pernicious influence of these sentiments. These inaccuracies and fallacies did not at this period universally prevail; yet they advanced step by step until, about the time of Gregory the Great, "the eucharist began to be regarded as a sacrifice, and the sacrificial customs of the Jewish dispensation were supposed to be in harmony with the spirit of that sacred ordinance."†

* CHRYSOSTOM, as quoted in RIDDLE'S "Christian Antiquities," p. 546.

† RIDDLE'S "Christian Antiquities," p. 561. The Acts of the Synod of Antisiodorum, held A.D. 581, show how these sentiments prevailed. "The thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh Canons forbid women to receive the

The gradual adoption of gaudy and imposing ceremonies, borrowed, for the most part, from the worship of the Heathen, kept pace with this increase of doctrinal errors. Preparatory to communion, self-examination, confession, and absolution were required, as no person lying under ecclesiastical censure was allowed to communicate. The communicants were required to have fasted, abstained from all sensual pleasures, and to appear in an apparel suitable to the occasion. This was probably white: the women usually wore white veils. Before communicating, they washed their hands. Then followed the consecration of the elements, which appears to have included the scriptural history of the institution, accompanied by prayer. Hence Irenæus says, that "it is done by invocation of God ;" and Origen states, that "it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." Gregory the Great was of opinion, that the apostles used only the Lord's Prayer as the form of consecration. After the consecration came prayers for the whole catholic church, the bishops and clergy in particular, for kings and magistrates, and for the dead in general. On this latter point numerous testimonies are found in the Fathers.

Tertullian speaks of "oblations for the dead, for their birth-days," that is, the day of their death. He says, that every woman prayed for the soul of her deceased husband, desiring that he might find rest and refreshment at present, and have a part in the first resurrection ; and offered an oblation for him on the anniversary of the day of his death. In like manner, he says, the husband prayed for the soul of his wife, and offered annual oblations for her. Cyprian and Origen often mention the same practice, when they speak of martyrs and of others. Cyril of Jerusalem, in describing the prayer after consecration, says, "We offer this sacrifice in memory of all those that are fallen asleep before us ; believing it to be a considerable advantage to their souls to be prayed for, whilst the holy and tremendous sacrifice lies upon the altar."

eucharist with the naked hand, *or to touch the linen cloth which covers the body of our Lord.*"—DU PIN, vol. v., p. 153.

On some occasions, before they made oblation for the dead, the names of the most eminent departed bishops, saints, and martyrs, were enumerated. Afterward various other prayers were offered. In "the Constitutions" there is one petition in the deacon's bidding-prayer after the consecration, which is not to be passed over in silence : it is, that God would receive the gift that had been offered to Him, to His altar in heaven, as a sweet-smelling savour, by the mediation of Christ. This form seems to have been as ancient as the time of Irenæus.*

Another ceremony was observed by the ancients in consecrating the eucharist : they brake the bread, to represent the passion and crucifixion of Christ. Clemens Alexandrinus speaks of this as a general custom ; and Austin says, that the whole church observed it. In the fulness of their extravagant estimation of the eucharist, some persons in the early ages actually gave it to the dead. This practice was condemned by several councils, which fact shows how widely the superstition had spread. Yet, although this absurdity was thus reprobated, Gregory the Great is said to have approved of a rite equally futile,—that of burying the sacred elements with the dead, which is reported to have been frequently practised.

After these preliminary observances, the communion took place. "The Constitutions" prescribe the order in which this is to be done. "First, let the bishop receive ; then the presbyters, deacons, sub-deacons, readers, singers, and ascetics ; among the women, the deaconesses, virgins, and widows ; after that, the children ; then all the people in order." In the primitive church, after the clergy had communicated, the people advanced to the table by two and two, the men first, and the women following. But after the fourth century, none but the clergy were allowed to approach the altar, as it had then begun to be called. Several rites accompanied this service. Here, as well as in the celebration of baptism, we find the kiss of charity in

* BINGHAM'S "Christian Antiquities," book xv., chap. iii., sect. 15, 30.

use, the men saluting the males, and the women those of their own sex.

On this occasion the sign of the cross was frequently used. This practice is alluded to by Basil, Chrysostom, and Augustine. It is even supposed, from a disputed passage in the third canon of the second council of Tours, that the bread was placed on the altar in the form of the cross.*

Incense was also used at the celebration of the eucharist in the sixth century. That this was not the practice of the primitive church, we have the important testimony of Tertullian, who speaks of the use of incense by the Christians for embalming their dead, in opposition to its use by the Heathen for the purposes of worship. He says, “ ‘ Certainly we do not buy incense, the oblation of it being generally the act of individuals; and if Arabia complains of this, the Sabeans shall know, the Christians expend their wares at a higher price, and in larger quantities, for embalming their dead, than the Heathens in fumigating their gods.’ ” Incense was not adopted *then* in Christian worship; but it was immediately after the establishment of Christianity, ‘incense’ being expressly mentioned in the second of those Apostolical Canons which are cited by name as early as A.D. 394.” † From the time of Gregory the practice appears to have obtained general sanction, and, to use the words of an early writer, “ there is no ceremony of the church, of which more frequent mention is made in the liturgies; both ancient and modern of all nations, than the frequent burning of incense during the holy sacrifice.” ‡

Thus the doctrines and ceremonies of Heathen sacrifices were adopted, and the Lord’s supper wrested from its original and simple design, into a propitiatory oblation. It is

* DU PIN, vol. v., p. 149. A striking instance of the extent to which this superstition had grown in the time of Gregory, is given in his works: “ A nun, having greedily taken a lettuce in a garden without making the sign of the cross, was possessed with a devil. Equitius dispossessed her, after he had made the devil confess that he was upon this lettuce.”—Vol. v., p. 99.

† WHITAKER’S “ Cathedral of Cornwall,” vol. i., p. 139.

‡ RIDDLE’S “ Christian Antiquities,” p. 561.

curious to mark the progress of this superstition, and how carefully all the minute arrangements of the church were made to contribute to this unhallowed change. We give one instance of this. At the council of Agatha, held A.D. 506, it was decreed, by the fourteenth canon, that "the altars shall be consecrated not only by the unction of chrism, but also by the sacerdotal benediction ;" * while at the council of Epaone, held eleven years afterwards, the twenty-sixth canon ordains, that "only altars of stone shall be consecrated with chrism." † Thus was promoted, to the full extent of ecclesiastical influence, a transformation of the Lord's table into an altar of sacrifice.

In the fourth century the eucharist "was sometimes celebrated at the tombs of the martyrs, and at funerals ; which custom undoubtedly gave rise to the masses that were afterwards performed in honour of the saints, and for the benefit of the dead. In many places the bread and wine were held up to view before their distribution, that they might be seen by the people, and contemplated with a certain religious respect ; and hence, not long after, the adoration of the symbols was unquestionably derived." ‡ The following age, far from discarding, added to these evils. "If," says the same author, "before this time, the lustre of religion was clouded with superstition, and its divine precepts adulterated with a mixture of human inventions, this evil, instead of diminishing, increased daily. A singular and irresistible efficacy was also attributed to the bones of martyrs, and to the figure of the cross, in defeating the attempts of Satan, removing all sorts of calamities, and in healing, not only the diseases of the body, but also those of the mind." Meantime, "divine worship was daily rising from one degree of pomp to another, and degenerating more and more into a gaudy spectacle, only proper to attract the stupid admiration of a gazing populace." The riches and magnificence of the churches exceeded all bounds. They

* DU PIN, vol. v., p. 111.

† *Ibid.*, p. 116.

‡ MOSHEIM'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 400.

were also adorned with costly images ; among which, that of the Virgin Mary, holding the child Jesus in her arms, obtained the first and principal place.

In the sixth century, "the cause of true religion sunk apace, and the gloomy reign of superstition extended itself in proportion to the decay of genuine piety. The western churches were loaded with rites by Gregory the Great, who had a marvellous fecundity of genius in inventing, and an irresistible force of eloquence in recommending, superstitious observances." This pontiff also prescribed a new method of administering the Lord's supper, which was attended with a magnificent assemblage of pompous ceremonies. This institution of his was called "the canon of the mass ;" and if any are unwilling to give it the name of a new appointment, they must at least acknowledge, that it was a considerable augmentation of the ancient canon for celebrating the eucharist, and occasioned a remarkable change in the administration of that ordinance.*

We must here close our examination of this branch of the subject. The evidence might be vastly extended ; the great difficulty has been to abridge and condense it. It is thought, that enough has been adduced to make it plain, that a lamentable degree of superstitious reverence for the sacraments was engendered, prior to the close of the sixth century, and that various Heathenish rites and ceremonies had been introduced into their observance.

As another proof of the corruption of the church, before the mission of Augustine,—and the last to which we shall call special attention,—we briefly notice the establishment of hierarchical despotism.

Our design and limits forbid any lengthened investigation of church economy with regard to its ruling powers. Every reader is aware that on this subject extreme opinions have been entertained. Without entering into the merits of these, we shall endeavour to show, that, at the time of Gregory the Great, the position occupied by the ministers of the church, and the powers which they claimed, were not

* MOSHEIM'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. ii., pp. 138-140.

only unwarranted by the authority of Scripture and of reason, but were such as, to a great extent, were calculated to frustrate the merciful and beneficent designs of the Gospel.

In endeavouring to evince this, it will be necessary to bear in mind, that we do not charge, on the parties concerned, a deliberate and settled design to bring about the effects which flowed from their course of conduct. The church was planted in the most critical juncture of this world's history; and the results of Christian teaching and Gospel discipline were affected by various, and sometimes opposing, principles at different times and places. Thus, while the clergy of the East displayed the national propensity of the Grecian mind to theoretic refinement, to logical subtilty, and to boundless speculation, and made Christianity a matter of intellect; the clergy of the West, imbued with the Roman passion for power, looked upon the same Gospel mainly as opening a field of government, and very soon found in it, or added to it, whatever was necessary for consolidating a vast spiritual despotism. With the Greeks, the religion of Christ came in the place of the spent philosophy of their ancient schools; with the Latins, it was a new ensign which they might rear on the site of the overthrown empire of the Cæsars. This, to a certain extent at least, accounts for the steady uniformity with which the western hierarchy pressed forward in their course of usurpation, until they had firmly grasped the effective weapons of secular authority.

The first element of this unreasonable and illegitimate power arose out of the different orders which were established among the clergy. We have seen that in apostolical times the terms "bishop" and "presbyter" were used interchangeably; and although it may be freely admitted, that not only apostles, but also persons appointed by them, exercised considerable authority in the infant church, yet it is unmistakeable that, at this period, the ministers of Christ's Gospel had one interest and one object, and were united to each other, and to the whole body of Christian believers, by the strong bond of mutual sympathy. The

progressive influence of events, during three or four centuries, not only drew a broad and strong line of distinction between the pastors and the people, as "clergy" and "laity," but also divided those clergy into different orders, assigning to each their different duties, rank, and dignity.

Thus the clergy were not only taught to feel that they stood as an order separate from the lay members of the church, and possessed peculiar rites and interests; but the distinction of rank that obtained among them greatly contributed to foster a love of power, and extended the means of its exercise. Hence when (to overlook minor grades) the church contained sub-deacons, deacons, presbyters, bishops, metropolitans, and patriarchs; and when each degree of advancement afforded an increase, not only of dignity, but of power; it is evident that, in the ordinary course of human action, the highest offices would be desired, and the authority which they offered would be carefully guarded and amply exercised.

Another element which greatly contributed to the aggrandizement of the superior clergy, and the consolidation of ecclesiastical power, is found in the prevalence of ascetic institutions, and in their influence on clerical celibacy. If the reader feels disposed to doubt the tendency which the isolation of the superior clergy from the people had to augment the power of the church, it will be sufficient for him to consider the existence and influence of Christian celibacy. It must be confessed that, while policy may require a prominent distinction between the governors and the governed, it equally demands the existence of connecting links between the parties. The two usages which we have before us supply both requisites. While the separate character and elevated position of the church dignitaries afforded great facilities for the attainment of power, the monastic institutions, which at this period were everywhere numerous, and which stood intimately connected with all grades of society, united the clerical authorities to the mass of the people by firm and vital ties. An extended inquiry into the subject would display the appropriateness and

efficiency of this connecting bond in a startling manner. It will, however, be sufficient for our purpose to observe, that these numerous and potential institutions, although independent of the inferior clergy, stood intimately connected with the highest ecclesiastical authorities ; and thus exhibited at once an active and efficient agency, through which ecclesiastical influence could always be exerted ; and also an almost unlimited amount of material for building the lower parts of that vast pyramid on the top of which priestly power was to sit enthroned, and sway the destinies of the world.

Asceticism must be noticed not only as contributing in a political manner to the promotion of hierarchical despotism : it did more. The principle itself was introduced into the Christian ministry. The doctrine that celibacy is a higher and a holier state than matrimony, when once recognised, soon showed its influence on the clergy. The teaching of Tertullian and Cyprian was not lost upon the ecclesiastics ; and, although licence was allowed to the inferior church-officers, dignitaries were required to conform to the self-denying principle. Thus an external and fictitious rule of holiness was introduced ; but it was one which united the superior clergy with the great mass of monks and nuns.

We have also to notice the influence which the sacramental superstition exercised on priestly authority. The doctrines which we have already shown to have prevailed, during the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, respecting baptism and the Lord's supper, must have mightily increased the power of the clergy in general, and of the bishops in particular. According to these doctrines, every celebration of the sacraments was accompanied by a miraculous divine agency. The baptismal water was declared to be so imbued with mysterious power, that its application actually secured the forgiveness of sins, and the regeneration of the soul. The bread and wine of the Lord's supper were said to be, by the same ministerial agency, either miraculously transformed into, or mysteriously associated with, the real body and blood of Christ, and thus rendered efficacious to minister spiritual

sustenance to the human soul. It was asserted that salvation was impossible, without a participation in these "tremendous mysteries," which could be received from the priest only; who had thus the power to shut out any person from eternal life, by refusing him access to these sacraments. More than this: it was affirmed that the power of effecting these miracles was acquired only through episcopal ordination. What an awful commentary on the doctrine of "the keys!" Above all, what an engine for debasing and enslaving the world! Truly may it be said of every bishop, claiming the exercise of such powers, "Thou hast said in thine heart, I will be like the Most High." (Isai. xiv. 13, 14.)

But we have to add to these elements of power two others, nearly akin to each other. First, the influence accruing to the bishops, as judges of the various causes tried before them; and, Secondly, the authority which resulted from their being the sole depositaries of the funds of the church.

1. The first arose from obedience to the apostolic recommendation, that Christians should not carry their disputes before unbelievers, but have them decided by the wise among the brethren. In primitive times this practice involved the bishops in labour and danger, without reward; but it was not so in succeeding centuries, when the bishop sat upon his throne, and challenged to himself the decision of cases regarding his clergy, and was applied to generally in preference to the civil courts. Hence a great amount of power accrued to the bishops.

2. They were the depositaries of church property. On no point is the church of the fifth century more unapostolic than on this. In primitive times, even when the church was small, and its affairs limited, the apostles deemed it wrong for them to leave the ministration of the word, that they might serve tables. Accordingly approved men from among the laity were appointed to have the oversight of those pecuniary affairs. When, however, the funds of the church had been greatly augmented by the pious donations and bequests of her wealthy members; when her property had been legalized by imperial enactment; who *then* presided over the

appropriation? Not laymen; they were entirely excluded; and the bishops exercised almost unbounded authority.*

Before dismissing this part of the subject, it is necessary to advert to the effect produced by synods and councils. In a preceding page we have considered this subject under another aspect. We are now about to regard these assemblies as the means of increasing the despotic power of the superior clergy. At first all the ministers of the Gospel sat together, and deliberated on the affairs of the church. Long before the time of Gregory, this had been laid aside. In general, each church was represented in the synod by its bishop only. Sometimes, however, he was attended by a few of his clergy, who were chosen by himself. With other bishops he sat in council, and returned to his diocese laden with authoritative canons and decrees; not to be scrutinized and deliberated upon by the inferior clergy or people, but to be obeyed.

Thus, by the establishment of a superior order of ministers, elevated as a distinct body high above their brethren; by the influence of numerous monkish institutions; by the extravagant and superstitious views of sacramental efficacy which generally obtained; taken in connexion with the authority resulting to the episcopal order from the courts of judgment which they were privileged to hold, and the important funds which they had taken the liberty to expend; an immense and resistless amount of power was placed in the hands of the superior clergy;—a power which was condensed and brought into practical operation by means of councils. It will be evident to any observer, that these concurring agencies would, under any circumstances, be sufficient to confer great power. The condition of western Europe was such at this period as to promote this result in an unusual degree. The political magistrates of the empire were rapidly sinking from their high position. Trade and commerce, the great causes of freedom and liberal energy, had sunk into lifeless torpor. Superstition was widely

* TAYLOR'S "Ancient Christianity," vol. i., p. 428.

extended. Thus a state of society existed, the most favourable for the establishment of spiritual despotism.

In the course of our review of the condition of the church prior to the mission of Augustine, we have found the Christianity of that age darkened and impeded by the existence and prevalent operation of four great errors,—ascetic doctrines and practices ; idolatrous reverence for saints and martyrs ; superstitious regard for the sacraments ; and the possession and exercise of extravagant despotic powers by the superior clergy. Other details might be added, which would give increasing gloom to the picture ; but these are sufficient for our purpose, and will prepare us for appreciating the character of the religion which the Roman missionaries taught our Saxon ancestors. It must not, however, be imagined that because these Popish dogmas were so early received by the church, all the errors of Popery had been introduced. On the contrary, the doctrine of merit, the greatest practical perversion of divine grace, was then unknown. Priestly despotism was not then concentrated in the person of one universal bishop or pope. So far from this being the case, Gregory himself declared, that the person who should claim the title of “ universal bishop ” would be evidently *Antichrist*. The church had not then claimed infallibility. Her religious services were then conducted in the vernacular language of the people, and not, as in following ages, locked up in the darkness of an unknown tongue. Nor were the Scriptures wholly withheld from the people. These and other aberrations had not been introduced.

How far the errors to which we have referred as existing in the church prevented the spread of pure, vital, evangelical religion, no inquiries of ours can fully ascertain. We may charitably hope that, even amid all this superstition, there were those who walked in the light of the divine countenance, and rejoiced in God their Saviour. Gregory himself, although clearly chargeable with promoting doctrinal and ceremonial error, appears, nevertheless, to have possessed a heart that deeply lamented the spiritual destitution of his fellow men, and a spirit that zealously laboured to

promote their evangelization. We have in him an instance of important active virtues, co-existent with great and serious defects. In him we see a prelate who valued the Bible, and who urgently recommended even the laity to study it; but who held, notwithstanding, very low and unworthy views of Gospel doctrines and privileges. When a lady of the bed-chamber to the empress Augusta wrote to this bishop, inquiring whether he could give any satisfactory information as to her obtaining the forgiveness of her sins, Gregory in reply assured her that "certainty in this matter was not attainable: we must," says he, "repent and mourn over our sins, and apply for pardon continually."* How strikingly does this language contrast with that of the apostles! The bishop was evidently ignorant of the great doctrines of justification by faith, and of the witness of the Spirit; and the existence of this ignorance enables us easily to account for his partiality for rites and ceremonies.

* MILNER'S "Church History," chap. v., cent. vi.

CHAPTER X.

THE MISSION OF AUGUSTINE, AND THE SPREAD OF
CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE ANGLO-SAXONS.

THE Anglo-Saxons having subdued and taken possession of all the southern and eastern parts of the island, their religion was established in every portion of their dominions ; and notwithstanding that Britain had been favoured with the Gospel for more than two hundred years, it was again regarded by the Christians of the Continent as a Pagan country. After the parts which they had conquered had remained in heathen darkness above a century, Christianity was again actively propagated in them by missionaries, who were sent from Rome for that purpose. The following are the circumstances which led to this result.

Gregory the Great, some time before his elevation to the see of Rome, was passing one day through the market of that city, when he observed, in the place where slaves were sold, three beautiful boys, with white skins and fine flowing hair, exposed for sale. Their interesting appearance exciting Gregory's sympathy, he inquired from what country they had been brought ; and was answered that they were from Britain, whose inhabitants were all of that fair complexion. He then asked whether they were Christians or Pagans. On being told that they were idolaters, he exclaimed, with a deep sigh, " What a pity that such a beautiful form should cover a mind so void of internal graces ! " On hearing further that they were called *Angles*, Gregory observed that they were rightly called : for they were beautiful as *angels*, and therefore it was fit that they should become the companions of angels in heaven. He then demanded the name of the province from which they had been brought ; and was informed that it was designated *Deira* (the southern part of Northumbria). Gregory said

that it was rightly so called, because they were to be delivered *de ira Dei*, "from the wrath of God." Inquiring, in addition, what was the name of their king, and being told it was *Ella*, "Then," said he, "it is fit that *Hallelujah* should be sung in that land."

The deep sympathy thus excited in the mind of Gregory did not pass away with this playful verbal iteration. His mind pondered over the dark and miserable condition of the Saxon inhabitants of Britain; and he shortly afterward applied to Benedict, then bishop of Rome, for leave to attempt the establishment of a mission among them. This was granted, and he actually departed on his journey. But, at the pressing instance of the people of Rome, the bishop was induced to recall him. His benevolent scheme was consequently delayed several years. As *Ella* died A.D. 589, these circumstances must have taken place prior to that year.

In A.D. 592, Gregory became bishop of Rome, and about four years afterwards again turned his attention to the evangelization of the Saxons of Britain. For the accomplishment of this purpose, he selected Augustine, with other monks. After making the necessary provisions for their journey, they set out toward the scene of their missionary operations. They appear, however, to have had much less of zealous determination than their bishop; for they had only journeyed a few days, when they became quite appalled at the difficulty and danger of their enterprise. They therefore halted, and sent Augustine back to Rome to represent to the bishop the barbarous character of the people to whom they were sent, the various perils and disadvantages connected with the attempt, and to entreat that they might have leave to return.

Contrary to their expectations, Gregory was firm. Instead of being dispirited by difficulties, he laboured to overcome them by enlarged means and increased energy. He wrote letters to Theodoric and Theodebert, kings of France, and several epistles to French bishops, urging them to accommodate and assist Augustine and his companions in their pious

design. He also wrote the following letter to encourage the disheartened missionaries :—

“Gregory, the servant of the servants of God, to the servants of our Lord. Forasmuch as it had been better not to begin a good work, than to think of desisting from that which has been begun, it behoves you, most beloved of sons, to fulfil the good work, which, by the help of our Lord, you have undertaken. Let not, therefore, the toil of the journey, nor the tongues of evil-speaking men, deter you; but, with all possible earnestness and zeal, perform that which, by God’s direction, you have undertaken; being assured, that much labour is followed by an eternal reward. When Augustine, your chief, returns, whom we also constitute your abbot, humbly obey him in all things; knowing that whatsoever you shall do by his direction will, in all respects, be available to your souls. Almighty God protect you with His grace, and grant that I may, in the heavenly country, see the fruits of your labour; inasmuch as, though I cannot labour with you, I shall partake in the joy of the reward, because I am willing to labour. God keep you in safety, my most beloved sons! Dated the 10th of the Kalends of August, in the fourteenth year of the reign of our pious and most august lord, Mauritius Tiberius; the thirteenth year after the consulship of our said lord; the fourteenth indiction; A.D. 596.”

Augustine and his company, which is said to have amounted to forty in number, were kindly entertained by the king, queen, and bishops of France, who provided them with every requisite for the journey, and, amongst the rest, with interpreters who understood the Anglo-Saxon language, which appears at that time to have been nearly the same with that of the Franks. Under such favourable auspices, Augustine crossed the Channel, and landed at the Isle of Thanet, on the coast of Kent.

Ethelbert, the king of that part of England, had married Bertha, a niece to the king of those Franks who had then obtained possession of the country around Paris. This princess was a Christian; and her uncle stipulated at her

marriage that she should be allowed the free exercise of her religion. Accordingly, for the purpose of fulfilling this engagement, queen Bertha took with her to England a bishop called Lindhard, and repaired or re-built a church which had been originally erected by the Romans. Thus Christian worship was introduced into the oldest Saxon kingdom, even before the arrival of the missionaries who were journeying from Rome to promote the evangelization of the inhabitants of Britain.

On landing, Augustine sent some of his interpreters to the king, to acquaint him that "they had come from Rome, and brought a joyful message, which most undoubtedly assured, to all that took advantage of it, everlasting joys in heaven, and a kingdom that would never end with the living and true God." The king, in reply, directed them to remain where they had landed; and assured them that they should be supplied with all necessaries, and that he would soon make further arrangements respecting them. Some days after, the king went over to the Island of Thanet, and, sitting in the open air, commanded Augustine and his companions to be brought into his presence. Bede (from whom we have this account) informs us that the king took this precaution of being in the open air, lest, if the meeting were in a house, the missionaries might impose on him by some magical arts. At the king's command, the missionaries drew near, "bearing a silver cross for their banner, and the image of our Lord and Saviour painted on a board; and, singing the Litany, they offered up their prayers to the Lord for the eternal salvation both of themselves and of those to whom they were come." The king having signified his wish that they should sit down, they preached unto him and all his attendants the blessed Gospel. When they had finished speaking, the king answered them in these terms: "Your words and promises are very fair; but as they are new to us and of uncertain import, I cannot approve of them, forsaking that which I have so long followed with the whole English nation. But because you are come from far into my kingdom, and, as I conceive, are desirous to impart to

us those things which you believe to be true and most beneficial, we will not molest you, but give you favourable entertainment, and take care to supply you with your necessary sustenance ; nor do we forbid you, by preaching, to gain as many as you can to your religion."

Encouraged by this reception, Augustine and his companions fixed their residence at Canterbury, the metropolis of the kingdom of Kent. Here they commenced their regular labours, holding meetings for singing, prayer, preaching, and the administration of the sacraments. These means, recommended by the spotless life of the missionaries, and the pious efforts of the queen, were crowned with success. The king and many of his people believed, and were baptized ; and great numbers began to flock together to hear the word. Gregory, on hearing of this auspicious progress, sent a *pall* to Augustine. This was a peculiar sort of cloak, or robe, by which the latter ecclesiastic received the dignity of an archbishop, and the former claimed the exercise of a patriarch's authority over the infant Anglo-Saxon church.

Seven years after this, Gregory invested two ministers, named Mellitus and Justus, with episcopal dignity, and directed them to the kingdom of Essex, where Sabert, the son of Ethelbert's sister, was then reigning. Here also Christianity was favourably received ; and Ethelbert, to whose power this inferior state was subject, began the erection of St. Paul's church at London, the metropolis of Essex.

Thus far the religion of Christ was introduced into the Saxon kingdoms in a manner suitable to its pure and benevolent character. But we must not forget that it was not simply the religion of the apostles and of the Bible, but it was this commingled with the errors described in the preceding chapter. Soon after its introduction, we find Gregory advising Augustine to aim at its further extension among the people by means which, to say the least, appear to be very questionable. At the first, Gregory had directed that the idol temples should be destroyed. This advice he after-

ward withdrew, thinking it better that they should be appropriated to the purposes of Christian worship. Accordingly, he says in a subsequent letter, "Therefore let these places of heathen worship be sprinkled with holy water; let altars be built, and relics placed under them; for, if these temples are well built, it is fit that the property of them should be altered, that the worship of devils be abolished, and the solemnity changed to the service of the true God; in order that, when the natives perceive those religious structures remain standing, they may keep to the place, without retaining the error; and be less shocked at their first entrance upon Christianity, by frequenting the temples which they have been used to esteem. And since it has been their custom to sacrifice oxen to the devils they adored, this usage ought to be refined on, and altered to an innocent practice." He further advises, that "upon the anniversary of the saints whose relics are lodged there, or upon the return of the day on which the church was consecrated, the people should make them booths about those churches lately rescued from idolatry, provide an entertainment, and keep a Christian holiday; * not sacrificing their cattle to the devil, but killing them for their own refreshment, and praising God for the blessing. And thus, by allowing them some satisfactions of sense, they may relish Christianity the better, and be raised by degrees to the more noble pleasures of the mind; for, unpolished, ignorant people are not to be cured all at once. He that intends to reach the top of an eminence, must rise by gradual advances, and not think to mount at a single leap." This letter is dated June, A.D. 601.

We think it important to notice these directions, and the reasoning upon which they are founded, especially as equally objectionable sentiments have been expressed on the same subject by some of the ablest writers of the present day. The venerable and estimable Sharon Turner, for instance,

* We discern in this practice the origin of our parish feasts or revels, which in almost all cases have greatly ministered to the increase of riot, debauchery, and every other vice.

alluding to the "popular customs" and "superstitions" which were permitted to intermix themselves with the doctrines of Scripture, observes, "Nor is it clear that its new converts would have relished or understood any purer system."* We do not stay to question the expediency of using, for the purposes of Christian worship, the buildings which had been Heathen temples, after their idolatrous appendages had been destroyed, and they had been publicly and solemnly set apart for the pure worship of Almighty God. This might have been done with propriety, even without the use of what has been called "holy water." But are we to believe that it was really necessary to adulterate the Gospel, for the purpose of introducing it to the acceptance of these rude and barbarous nations? Was this the practice of the apostles? Would not the power of the Holy Spirit, in His enlightening and renewing influences, have been sufficient to raise the mind of the rude Anglo-Saxons to a perception of divine truth? And was not this the purpose and design of God in the communication of His holy Gospel, with respect not only to them, but to every nation and kindred and people?† The policy to which we object appears to be absurd, inasmuch as, while many, alas! very many, Christian churches have gradually retrograded from the truth, and have adulterated the word of God by the counsels of men, few indeed have advanced in doctrinal and disciplinary purity; nor do we think any person will be found prepared to contend, that the latter was the case with the Anglo-Saxon church. But, more than this, the conduct of Gregory and Augustine indicated a serious amount of ignorance respecting the real nature of Gospel truth, and of the privileges which it was intended to communicate to the souls of mankind. Those who were fully aware of the power of the Gospel to impart pardon and divine peace to the conscience; and who knew that simple faith in the blood of Jesus Christ

* TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. i., p. 341.

† The success with which it has pleased Almighty God to crown the efforts of the Church of England, Wesleyan, and other missionaries, who have preached the pure word of truth to the islanders of the South Pacific, forms a perfect practical refutation of Gregory's earthly-minded policy.

gave the penitent sinner a conscious interest in His atonement, and that the Holy Spirit sensibly attested to every truly converted soul the fact of his adoption into God's family ;—those who fully recognised these great truths would by them be raised far above the doctrines of expediency, which we have just noticed, knowing that they possessed in the Gospel “the wisdom of God, and the power of God.” They would perceive that the introduction of one Saxon into the experience and enjoyment of these high and holy privileges, would, by the effect of his character and example on his countrymen, do more toward recommending the Gospel to their acceptance than any accommodation of festivals, or similar means, could possibly effect.

Augustine, having thus introduced Christianity among the Saxons, and hoping, by the aid of efficient agents, to bring the whole island under its influence, turned his attention to the remains of the ancient British church. He therefore sent into Wales, and requested a conference with the Christian ministers of the Principality. A meeting was accordingly held at a place which Bede called “Augustine's Oak,” and which is supposed to have been situated on the banks of the Severn, in some part of Worcestershire or Gloucestershire. Augustine opened the discussion by urging the importance of unity among Christian brethren, and the necessity of employing their joint efforts to enlighten the Heathen that still remained in the land. The terms of this debate, and the conduct of the different parties on this occasion, have been severely canvassed ; Romish writers blaming the schismatic obstinacy of the Britons, while Protestant authors equally condemn the pride and assumption of Augustine. The whole subject, however, turns upon the simple question, “Did the Romish prelate require the co-operation and friendship of the British Christians ? or did he demand their submission to him, and to the Roman see ?” If the former was the case, their refusal would evidently have been unworthy of their Christian profession ; but if the latter, their past character and present duty would alike unite in dictating a maintenance of that liberty and

independence which they had always enjoyed, and consequently in inducing them to reject the overtures which Augustine had made to them.

It is agreed on all hands, that it was required of the British Christians that they should consent to three particulars : to observe the Roman time of holding Easter ; to adopt the Roman form of baptism, and other ceremonies ; and to co-operate with the Roman clergy in converting the Saxons. Bishop Stillingfleet has clearly proved that these terms were not put as terms of agreement, but demanded as evidences of submission ; * and insists that the language of Augustine ought to be rendered, "Would they, or would they not, own his authority in those three things?" To this the Britons answered most pertinently, when they replied, that "they would do none of these things, *nor receive him as their archbishop.*" As this is the rejoinder which Bede (who was strongly prejudiced in favour of the Roman party) assures us our countrymen did give ; and as it is most improbable that they would have at all adverted to the accepting of Augustine as their archbishop, if it had never been actually or virtually required ; it is plain that, however difficult it may be now to obtain the exact terms of the debate, the supremacy of the Roman prelates must have been in some way stipulated, and therefore that the refusal was a manly and proper assertion of independence on the part of the British Christians.

Argument having failed, Augustine had recourse to one of his miracles. The Britons are said to have "unwillingly consented" to this mode of settling the dispute. A blind man, *a Saxon*, was then produced, whom the British bishops could not cure, but who, it is said, was immediately restored to sight by Augustine. This miracle, although insufficient to convince the Britons, produced considerable effect on the bystanders. The result of this debate was, a promise of the Britons, that they would consult the great body of their

* This is amply proved by the fact, that Gregory had actually given Augustine authority over the British bishops. *Vide* BEDÆ *Eccles. Hist.*, lib. i., cap. 25.

brethren, and attend another and larger assembly, when it should be convened.

At this second conference, seven British bishops attended, and many learned men from the famous monastery of Bangor, with Dinoth, the abbot, at their head. Before proceeding to the place of meeting, they consulted an aged anchorite, of great repute for his sanctity and wisdom; asking him, if it would be proper for them to give up their traditions at the persuasion of Augustine. "If he be a man of God," said the anchorite, "follow him." "But how," they inquired, "can we be assured of this?" "The Lord hath said," rejoined he, "'Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.' If this Augustine be 'meek and lowly in heart,' you may believe, that as he bears the yoke of Christ himself, he will impose no other upon you; but if he show himself haughty and proud, that affords you proof that he is not of God, nor are we to regard his words." "But how," they asked again, "shall we be able to discern even this?" "Do you contrive," said the anchorite, "that he may first arrive with his company at the place where the synod is to be held; and if at your approach he shall rise up to you, hear him submissively, being assured that he is the servant of Christ; but if he shall despise you, and not rise up to you, seeing you are the greater number, then let him be despised by you."

The British Christians resolved to act according to this advice. When they had arrived at the appointed place, Augustine, who was already seated, instead of rising up to greet them, kept his place; which conduct, agreeably to the advice they had received, and the impressions they had formed, was attributed to pride; and, consequently, they rejected every proposal that he made.

The account which Bede has preserved of this conference scarcely extends beyond the information already given; but the ancient British annals state, that Dinoth, the learned abbot of Bangor, entered with great acuteness and erudition into the dispute concerning supremacy, maintaining that the archbishop of St. David's had just and true authority

over the British churches, and that it would not be for their interest to acknowledge either Roman pride or Saxon tyranny. He found fault with Gregory for not admonishing the Saxons of their gross usurpations, against their solemn oaths; adding, that if they would be thought good Christians, they should restore the power to those from whom they had so unjustly and tyrannically wrested it. For, as Stillingfleet observes, "Dinoth could not but know that the pope, under a pretence of bringing in the true faith, could not confirm them in their unjust usurpation; and no doubt the British bishops looked upon this attempt of Augustine upon them to be the adding of one usurpation to another; which made them so averse to any communication with the missionaries." *

This appears to be the great secret of the disagreement. The Britons always regarded the Saxons as having unjustly and violently taken possession of the country; and when they began to profess the religion of Christ, without giving up or making compensation for their ill-gotten property, the inveterate opposition of the despoiled and persecuted Britons was rather increased than diminished by the circumstance. This result appears to have been greatly strengthened by the harsh and haughty conduct of Augustine, who, seeing that his proposals were rejected, "is said in a threatening manner to have foretold, that in case they would not join in unity with their brethren, they should be warred upon by their enemies; and if they would not preach the way of life to the English nation, they should at their hands undergo the vengeance of death." †

Thus terminated this conference; and thus firmly did the heads of the ancient British church resist the inroads of Romish authority, and maintain their independence. If certain circumstances had not afterward occurred, the closing speech of Augustine might have been passed over and forgotten; but a few years afterward the Britons were invaded by Ethelrid, the Saxon king of Northumberland. He took

* STILLINGFLEET'S *Origines Britannicæ*, p. 360.

† BEDÆ *Eccles. Hist.*, lib. ii., cap. 2.

Chester, and advanced with his hostile force into Wales. The monks of Bangor, remembering the threats of Augustine, were filled with alarm. The Britons collected their troops. On the armies approaching each other, the Saxon king observed a great number of persons apart from the British soldiers. He inquired who these were, and was told that they were priests and monks, who were engaged in earnest prayer to God for the protection of their nation, “‘If, then,” said he, ‘they cry to their God against us, in truth, though they do not bear arms, yet they fight against us, because they oppose us by their prayers.’ He therefore commanded them to be attacked first, when about twelve hundred of those that came to pray are said to have been killed.” * Thus these unarmed Christians were massacred; and afterward the British army was defeated, although with great loss to the Saxons.

The British writers ascribe this invasion and slaughter of Christian ministers to the advice and influence of Augustine. This allegation is repelled with great earnestness and indignation on behalf of the Saxons by many eminent men; who aver that when this event took place Augustine had been long dead; and that it appears most improbable that Ethelbert, a Christian king, should influence a Heathen prince to such acts of cruelty. Fuller, who has given the evidence *pro* and *con*, dismisses the subject by saying that his jury had found an “*ignoramus* ;” adding, “With whose commendable charity I concur; preferring rather to clear a twilight innocence into noonday, than to darken it into midnight.” †

This judgment is charitable, and we should be disposed to adopt it much more readily, but for the *animus* that is so evident in the account which Bede has furnished. This writer, although he had recognised the Britons as Christians, and although he knew that the Saxons who had destroyed them were Heathens, speaks of the Britons as “a perfidious nation,” “an impious army,” “perfidious men;” while no

* *BEDÆ Eccles. Hist.*, lib. ii., cap. 2.

† FULLER’S “Church History,” vol. i., p. 95.

word of censure escapes him respecting one of the most barbarous wholesale murders that stains the page of history. Twelve hundred men, who had fasted three days, and who were at the time engaged in prayer to God, are mercilessly destroyed; and the circumstance is quietly attributed to the "divine judgment," without a single reflection on the diabolical barbarity of the action. This conduct clearly shows that, even if Augustine did not either directly or indirectly prompt the Saxons to this course, the Christians of that nation regarded it rather with pleasure than otherwise.

"The consequence of the battle of Chester was, that the monastery of *Bangor Icoed* fell into the hands of the conqueror, and felt all the effects of his rage. That noble institution never after raised its head. This was the largest of all the *Bangors*, or religious houses, among the Britons; but even the very ruins cannot now be traced. Giraldus Cambrensis mentions that in his day the vast pile of ruins then to be seen bore testimony to the ancient fame and extent of this monastery. But we have now only the name of this once-celebrated place, which is said to have contained accommodations for seven courses of monks, each course including three hundred." *

But whoever instigated this sanguinary invasion, it was promptly and effectually repelled and chastised. The British people yet retained sufficient spirit and prowess to vindicate their honour, and defend the limited territory to which they had retired. Having had time to unite their forces, and to obtain the assistance of their brethren from the West, the Britons marched to attack the invaders, under command of Blederic, duke of Cornwall. The battle was fought on the banks of the Dee. Here the Saxon army was routed with the loss of ten thousand and sixty killed; and the king, after receiving a dangerous wound, was obliged to stipulate, that he would confine himself within his own country, north of Trent, and leave all Wales to be entirely and peaceably enjoyed by the Britons.†

* HUGHES'S *Horæ Britannicæ*, vol. i., p. 270.

† FULLER'S "Church History," vol. i., p. 95.

Soon after, if not just before, this invasion, (the point has been sharply contested, but never decided,) Augustine died; and was succeeded as archbishop by Laurence (Laurentius). According to Bede, this event took place A.D. 604. Augustine was shortly after followed to the tomb by his friend and protector, Ethelbert, king of Kent. At this time Canterbury was an archbishopric, where a cathedral (Christ's Church) had been erected, and also a residence for the bishop. A bishopric had been established at Rochester, and another at London. In the latter city St. Paul's was built on the site of a heathen temple. The Abbey of Westminster had been founded. At this period, also, a code of written laws or decrees was published, in the old English or Saxon tongue, by the authority of Ethelbert, with the advice of his *witena-gemot*, or parliament. These were the earliest English written laws.

Notwithstanding these promising appearances, a dark cloud soon gathered over the Christian cause among the Saxons. On the death of Ethelbert, Eadbald, his son and successor, renounced the profession of Christianity; and Sebert, king of Essex, dying soon after, his sons also relapsed into idolatry, and forbade the return of Mellitus, bishop of London, who had been long absent at Rome. The influence of this retrograde movement was also felt at Rochester, where the people gave up their profession of Christianity in such numbers, that Justus, the bishop of that diocese, left them, and retired to Canterbury, where he found Mellitus on his return from Rome. After consulting together on the gloomy aspect which affairs presented, the archbishop and the two bishops determined on leaving the country.

Mellitus and Justus immediately carried their resolution into practice, and sailed over to France; while Laurence remained behind for a few days. The night before his intended departure, he ordered his bed to be placed in the church of St. Peter and St. Paul; where, laying himself down to rest, after having "poured out many prayers and tears to God for the state of the church, he fell asleep. In

the dead of night, the blessed prince of the apostles appeared to him ; and, scourging him with apostolical severity," expostulated with him on his intended abandonment of his flock, at the same time reminding him of his own sufferings and death. "The next morning Laurence repaired to the king ; and, taking off his garment, showed the scars and stripes which he had received. The king, astonished, asked who had presumed to give such stripes to so great a man ; and was much frightened when he heard that the bishop had suffered so much at the hands of the apostle of Christ, for his salvation." *

This statement of Bede will excite painful feelings in the minds of true and unsophisticated Christians. Collier dismisses it without further remark than that "Bede reports" it. Churton says, that when Laurence awoke, he, in "the pangs of remorse for his weakness, afflicted his body with the discipline of the scourge : and thus, in the zeal inspired by what he believed to be a divine warning, came for the last time to make an appeal to the conscience of Eadbald." Milner, who omits all reference to it in the text of his work, observes in a note, "I was unwilling to introduce into the narrative the story of St. Peter's whipping of Laurentius that night in the church, and reproving him for his cowardice ; whence he was said to have been induced to wait upon Eadbald next morning, who was struck, it seems, with remorse at the sight of the stripes which the bishop had received. Stories of this sort were innumerable in those times. The steady perseverance of Eadbald, and the entire change both of his private and public conduct, demonstrate the reality of his conversion. He most probably retained an internal reverence for the religion in which he had been instructed in his childhood, against which his grand objection seems to have been the love of a dissolute life. The Lord honoured the prayers of Laurentius with success, and recovered the English church in its last extremity. The substance of the narrative remains entire, abstracted from the legend which disgraces it." †

* *BEDÆ Eccles. Hist.*, lib. ii., cap. 6.

† MILNER'S "Church History," chap. ix., cent. 7.

Agreeing in much of what is implied in these charitable expressions, we cannot overlook the fact stated by Bede; and considering that this venerable author wrote within about a century of the time when these events occurred, we think it highly probable that Laurentius gave the very statement that Bede records. If such was the case, although we may admit the devotedness and sincerity of the bishop, it must be concluded, that we have here some of the unhallowed fruit of those errors which, as we have already seen, had largely infected the church. In this transition-state, (if we may so speak,) passing from primitive purity to Popish darkness and superstition, ministers of the Gospel are seen availing themselves of what were afterward called "pious frauds." An ingenious contrivance is resorted to, an actual falsehood is told; and this to promote the religion of the Lord Jesus! If the archbishop had no sincere desire and intention to promote real religion, then the entire history of his labours and successes becomes an idle tale; if he had such a desire, what an awful amount of darkness must have gathered over the first principles of Christianity, before a learned and serious mind, with a good intention, could sink to such unworthy means of promoting a holy cause!

As has been already intimated, the efforts of Laurence were crowned with success. Christianity was again established in Kent. Justus returned to his charge at Rochester; but the inhabitants of London refused to receive Mellitus. Nor had Eadbald, though he attempted it, sufficient influence to induce them again to accept him. Mellitus, therefore, remained at Canterbury, and, A.D. 624, succeeded to that archbishopric, on the death of Laurentius.

About this time, the Gospel achieved another important triumph over Saxon Heathenism, in Northumberland. Edwin, having ascended the throne of this state, solicited in marriage the hand of Ethelburga, sister of Eadbald, king of Kent; but only obtained his suit by consenting to allow her and her attendants the free exercise of the Christian religion, and to turn his own serious attention to the nature and evidences of this holy faith. This Christian lady, the

daughter of queen Bertha, under whose auspices Christianity had been first introduced among the Saxons of Kent, took with her as her chaplain Paulinus, who on this occasion was consecrated archbishop of York. This marriage took place A.D. 625.

Paulinus laboured in Northumbria about a year, without seeing any special fruit of his missionary toils. At the end of this period, Edwin had a very narrow escape from the sword of an assassin, who had been sent to destroy him by Guichelm, king of the West Saxons. On this occasion one of his devoted courtiers was slain, and Edwin himself wounded. As his queen Ethelburga gave birth to a daughter just at the same time, Paulinus at once returned thanks for both deliverances. Edwin determined, if possible, to punish this atrocious and murderous attempt, and he promised the bishop that he would renounce idolatry, and serve Christ, if God would preserve his life, and give him victory over his enemies. As a pledge of this, he gave his infant daughter to Paulinus, that she might be consecrated to Christ in baptism. She was the first of the Saxon Northumbrians who was baptized. With her, twelve other members of her family partook of the same rite.

Having recovered from his wound, Edwin marched against his perfidious enemies, the West Saxons. He defeated their army, punished those who had conspired against his life, and returned home victorious. The queen and bishop now united their entreaties that he would, according to his promise, embrace Christianity. The king hesitated, desiring first to prevail on his influential barons to adopt the same course. He therefore called a *witena-gemot*, that the point might be discussed. On the meeting being convened, the new worship was proposed as the subject of their deliberations, and each was called upon to express his sentiments without reserve.

Coifi, the high priest, who presided over their idol-worship, without hesitation delivered his sentiments to the following effect: "You see, O king, what is now preached. I declare to you most truly what I have most certainly

experienced,—that the religion which we have hitherto professed contains no virtue at all, and as little utility. No one of all your court has been more attentive than I have been to the worship of our gods; and yet many have received far richer benefits, far greater honours, and have prospered more in all that men transact or pursue, than I have. But if these gods had been of any real worth, would they not in preference have assisted me who have never neglected them? If, then, on due inquiry, you shall perceive that these new things which are preached to us will be better and more efficacious, let us hasten to adopt them without any delay.” “This effusion of self-interest would lead one to suspect that the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Romanized and Christianized Britain, and the civilization, luxuries, and mental cultivation which it had to a certain extent exhibited to the Saxon eye, had already shaken their attachment to the rude superstitions of their ancestors; or the high priest of their national deities would not have so feelingly expatiated on his comparative neglect. This circumstance will serve to account for the ease with which Christianity was established in the island.” *

The speech of the next speaker is still more remarkable. A thane, or ealderman, said: “The present life of man, O king, seems to me, if compared with that after-period which is so uncertain to us, to resemble a scene at one of your wintry feasts. As you are sitting with your ealdermen and thegns about you, the fire blazing in the centre, and the whole hall cheered by its warmth, and while storms of rain and snow are raging without, a little sparrow flies in at one door, roams around our festive meeting, and passes out at some other entrance. While it is among us, it feels not the wintry tempest. It enjoys the short comfort and serenity of its transient stay; but then, plunging into the winter from which it had flown, it disappears from our eyes. Such is here the life of man. It acts and thinks before us; but as of what preceded its appearance among us we are ignorant, so are we of all that is destined to come afterwards. If,

* TURNER'S “History of the Anglo-Saxons,” vol. i., p. 355.

then, on this momentous future, this new doctrine reveals anything more certain or more reasonable, it is, in my opinion, entitled to our acquiescence." *

Other members of the council having given utterance to similar opinions, Coifi, the high priest, expressed a wish to hear Paulinus discourse concerning the God whom he preached. The bishop, by the king's command, complied with this request. Upon hearing this sermon, Coifi remarked: "I have long since been sensible that there was nothing in that which we worshipped; because, the more diligently I sought after truth in that worship, the less I found it. But now I freely confess, that such truth evidently appears in this preaching as can confer on us the gifts of life, of salvation, and of eternal happiness. For which reason I advise, O king, that we instantly abjure and set fire to those temples and altars which we have consecrated without reaping any benefit from them."

In the ample account which Bede has preserved of this council, we cannot but deeply regret that he has omitted giving us the substance of the preaching of Paulinus. If this had been recorded, we could have seen how far the sterling elements of Gospel truth were dispensed by these missionaries. Unfortunately, this means of judging their doctrine, and of testing its accordance with Holy Scripture, is denied us; and we can only form an opinion from the

* Wordsworth has given the following charming poetical version of this speech:—

"Man's life is like a sparrow, mighty king,
That, stealing in while by the fire you sit
Housed with rejoicing friends, is seen to flit
Safe from the storm, in comfort tarrying.
Here did it enter; there on hasty wing
Flies out, and passes on from cold to cold.
But whence it came we know not, nor behold
Whither it goes. Even such that transient thing,
The human soul; not utterly unknown
While in the body lodged, her warm abode;
But from what world she came, what woe or weal
On her departure waits, no tongue hath shown.
This mystery if the stranger can reveal,
His be a welcome cordially bestow'd."

results that followed. If we were to take the conduct of Coifi, the high priest, as an example, and could be satisfied of his honesty and sincerity, it would appear that immediate and strong conviction attended the visit and teaching of Paulinus. But the headlong precipitancy of this Saxon priest ; his eagerness to acknowledge the new religion, and to proceed to the destruction of the idols which he had so long and so lately worshipped ; taken in connexion with the consummate selfishness of the sentiments which he expressed ; irresistibly induce a suspicion that he had been engaged covertly to direct and lead the popular will in this movement.

The council having decided on adopting Christianity, the king publicly gave his licence to Paulinus to preach the Gospel ; and, renouncing idolatry, declared that he had received the faith of Christ. When he inquired of the high priest, who should first profane the altars and temples of the idols, Coifi replied, "I ; for who can more properly than myself destroy those things which I worshipped through ignorance, for an example to all others, through the wisdom which has been given me by the true God ?" Then immediately he desired the king to furnish him with arms and a horse ; and, having mounted, he set out to destroy the idols. The very fact of his riding forth armed on horseback, demonstrated his total renunciation of Paganism ; for it was not lawful, according to the Saxon religion, for the high priest to carry arms, or to ride, except on a mare. Thus mounted and armed, he rode to the idol-temple at Godmundham, not far from the king's palace on the Derwent, where this assembly appears to have been held. Upon reaching the scene of his former idolatries, he threw his lance into the building to profane it, and in token of defiance to the idols which it contained. This was the signal for its destruction ; for those who accompanied him, following his example and his orders, presently burned it to the ground.

Edwin, having thus forsaken the idols of his fathers, was baptized on Christmas Day, A.D. 627. His nobles generally followed his example, together with great numbers of the

lower ranks. Indeed, so widely did Christian sentiments prevail, that soon after, when the court removed into Bernicia, Paulinus accompanied it, and was there employed, for thirty-six days together, in instructing and baptizing the crowds who resorted to him.

On reviewing a case like this, we are willing to hope that a special measure of divine influence rested on the hearts of the people, inclining them to turn from idols, to serve the living and true God; and that some of them actually realized redemption in the blood of Christ, "even the forgiveness of sins." Yet, in estimating the nature and extent of the labours of Paulinus, we must not allow ourselves to be misled by the terms "bishop" and "archbishop," which are applied to this minister. We read of no clergy whom he had under him, no assistant of any kind, except James a deacon. He brought no fellow-labourers with him from Kent, received no assistance afterwards, either thence, or from the continent, so far as we can now ascertain; and when, on the death of Edwin, he fled from the scene of his labours, no mention is made of any ministers whom he took with him, or of any whom he left behind him, with the exception of the deacon just mentioned, who laboured for a considerable time, partly at York, but chiefly at Catterick, where a faithful remnant of Christians was preserved through his ministry.

The number of churches corresponded to the number of ministers. In the whole of Bernicia there was neither church nor chapel; for Bede assures us that, till Oswald set up the cross at Heaven-field, there was no church, no altar, no token of the Christian religion erected in that province. In Deira, too, we read of no church then in existence, except the oratory at York, and another wooden one near the king's residence at Campodunum. Paulinus, indeed, preached at many other places; but, like the primitive apostles, he was a field-preacher, ministering frequently by the banks of rivers. His most constant employment seems to have been that of chaplain or preacher to the royal family; for, to whatever place the court removed, he

went with it; and we scarcely read of his making any excursion, without the company of Edwin.* It appears, therefore, probable, that the personal experience of vital godliness was limited to few individuals; and that the titles to which reference has been made, arose either from a mistaken notion of the different orders existing in the Christian ministry, or from personal ambition; or from the united operation of both of these causes.

Prior to this period, Redwald, king of the East Angles, when visiting Kent, had professed to be convinced of the truth of Christianity, and had been admitted to the sacrament; but, on his return to his own country, the influence of his wife was sufficient to prevent him from entirely renouncing idolatry. Endeavouring, therefore, to compromise the matter between his convictions and his carnal inclinations, he introduced a table for the sacrament of Christ into the temple, which contained the altar of his idol-gods. Eorpwald, his son, who succeeded him in his kingdom, was induced, by the influence of Edwin, "to abandon his idolatrous superstitions, and, with his whole province, to receive the faith and sacraments of Christ."† Eorpwald was slain by the hand of an assassin, A.D. 633. He was succeeded by his brother Sigebert, who, having been converted to the faith of Christ while an exile in France, was truly zealous for the promotion of the religion of the Gospel. After having laboured several years, in co-operation with the ministers of religion, to advance its interests in various ways, and especially by establishing schools and promoting education, this pious prince resigned his crown, and retired to a monastery in France, A.D. 644.

In the year 633, Edwin was killed in a battle which he fought, to repel an invasion of his country by Penda, king of Mercia. His son Offrid having fallen with him, and his army being routed, the kingdom of Northumberland became a prey to the Heathen soldiers of Mercia. In consequence, the queen Ethelburga, with Paulinus, fled to her brother in

* YOUNG'S "History of Whitby Abbey," vol. i., p. 115.

† BEDÆ *Eccles. Hist.*, lib. ii., cap. 15.

Kent. From him she received a grant of land to found a monastery, in which she spent the remainder of her life; and Paulinus, on the death of Justus, was made bishop of Rochester. After the defeat and death of Edwin, Osric and Eanfrid took possession of the kingdom of Northumbria, the former reigning in Deira, and the latter in Bernicia. These princes, who had previously professed Christianity, on ascending the throne relapsed into Heathenism; and, for a short period, their territories became the theatre of a barbarous and desolating war, during which the interests of religion must have greatly suffered.

The principal part of this misery appears attributable to the efforts of a British king, named Cadwallon. He had entered into an alliance with Penda, and after the death of Edwin was greatly instrumental in ravaging this part of England, and in pillaging and destroying its unhappy inhabitants. After Northumbria had lain about a year in this deplorable condition, Osric and Eanfrid having fallen in the war, Oswald, a nephew of Edwin, who had in early life retired into Scotland, returned, and took the field against the invaders of his country. In a battle which almost immediately ensued, he slew Cadwallon, routed his army, and soon recovered all that his uncle Edwin had lost. This prince had received a Christian education in Scotland; and after his elevation to the throne steadily adhered to his baptismal vow, and laboured to induce a hearty reception of the Gospel among his subjects. Having been instructed in the Christian faith by ministers who had been trained at Columba's monastery at Iona, he wished his people to be taught by the same ministry. He therefore sent to Iona, requesting that a suitable person might come to him. In compliance with the king's wish, Aidan, a man of exemplary piety and great zeal, joined with meekness and moderation, went into Northumbria, and took the charge of its church. To further the work of God, Aidan invited over a number of his brethren, to assist him in giving instruction to the people. He settled at Lindisfarn, now called Holy Island, four miles from Berwick, where he built a church,

and founded a monastery. There he acted as bishop, abbot, and teacher of divinity; and thence he sent forth many preachers, as missionaries, into the neighbouring provinces.

This bishop, says Milner, "was a shining example of godliness. He laboured to convert infidels, and to strengthen the faithful. He gave to the poor whatever he received from the great, and employed himself with his associates in the Scriptures continually. He strictly avoided everything luxurious, and every appearance of secular avarice or ambition. He redeemed captives with the money which was given him by the rich: he instructed them afterwards, and fitted them for the ministry." *

The pious efforts of Aidan were ably and zealously seconded by the king, who travelled with him; and even interpreted his discourses, until the preacher had acquired a sufficient knowledge of the Saxon language, to enable him to address the people himself. At this period, we have some most honourable instances of kings becoming nursing-fathers, and queens nursing-mothers, to the church of Christ. The happy effects of these exertions were soon perceived. Other ministers came from Ireland and Scotland, and the cause and influence of religion greatly progressed in this part of the country.

About the same time, namely, A.D. 635, a priest of Rome, named Birinus, was advised by Honorius, bishop of Rome, to travel into Britain, for the purpose of preaching the Gospel. As he engaged, "that he would sow the seed of the holy faith, in the inner parts beyond the dominions of the English, (Anglo-Saxons,) where no teacher had been before him;" † he was consecrated bishop. Referring to this consecration, Fuller observes, that he was "made a bishop, that his preaching, belike, might be the more powerful. Here I am at a loss: bishop—of what? Where was his diocess, or bishopric? Were not bishop and bishopric so correlated in that age, that they must be together? the

* MILNER'S "Church History," cent. vii., chap. 1.

† BEDÆ *Eccles. Hist.*, lib. ii., cap. 7.

trick of making titular bishops, not as yet being used in Rome." *

It is evident from the account transmitted to us, that Birinus contemplated a mission to the North of Britain. Yet Providence appears to have guided his course into a very different district. For, having first landed among the West Saxons, where Kyngils then reigned, and finding this people entirely Heathen, he commenced his ministry among them; thus literally breaking, but virtually keeping, his promise. This sovereign and his people appear to have listened favourably to the preaching of the Gospel by Birinus. The hand of an over-ruling Providence is yet further discernible in this business; for, about this particular time, Oswald, the pious king of Northumberland, made a visit to the court of Kyngils, respecting a marriage which was contemplated between himself and the daughter of the West-Saxon monarch. The presence and influence of this Christian king, as well as the object of his visit, mightily aided the efforts of Birinus. Kyngils, having been instructed in the Christian faith, was baptized; Oswald standing at the font as his godfather, and afterward receiving his daughter in marriage.

Many of the people having also become Christians, Birinus was appointed to reside at Dorchester; not the town of that name in Dorsetshire, but a place not far from Oxford. He was established there by the joint authority of both the kings; Kyngils decreeing this measure, as this district was at that time a part of his dominions; and Oswald assenting to it, in his capacity of Bretwalda.

Thus Christianity was introduced successively into most of the kingdoms of the Heptarchy. Mercia still remained Heathen; but Divine Providence was preparing the way to make this state also a partaker of the blessing of Gospel light. By his ferocious character and sanguinary wars, Penda had inflicted grievous injuries on the neighbouring kingdoms, and especially on Christian princes. Not only Edwin of Northumberland, but Sigebert of East Anglia, and his successor Anna, had fallen fighting against him. Yet

* FULLER'S "Church History," vol. i., p. 119.

the Christian faith was introduced into his family. His daughter had already married a nephew of king Oswald; afterward his son Peada sought in marriage the daughter of Oswy, and sister of the prince who had married Penda's daughter; but Peada was told in reply that she could only be united to a Christian. This led the prince to inquire into the doctrines of the Gospel; and on hearing discourses of the heavenly kingdom, the resurrection, and a future and endless life, he declared that he would become a Christian, even if the princess were denied him. The result was, that he, with his attendants, was baptized, and the marriage took place. Peada at this time governed the province of Leicesters, and immediately began to introduce Christianity among his people. For the purpose of promoting this object, he brought with him four preachers from Northumberland, and was delighted at witnessing their evangelical success. Nor did the aged Penda obstruct these Christian efforts, or interfere with any of his subjects who were converted from Heathenism; but it is said that "he hated and despised those whom he perceived not to perform the works of faith, when they had received the faith of Christ, saying, 'They are contemptible and wretched who do not obey their God, in whom they believe.'"*

Notwithstanding the double alliance which we have related, Penda felt so severely the diminution of his power which the success of Oswald had occasioned, that he determined on another invasion of Northumbria. This purpose was speedily carried into effect. Oswald, whose gentle virtues rendered him more fitting to meliorate the human character than to meet and repel the martial fury of the veteran warrior of Mercia, encountered his foes at Oswestry in Shropshire. There he fought and fell, breathing out his spirit in prayer for his friends. The furious Penda caused his body to be dismembered, and the different parts to be exposed on stakes. Then, marching through the country, he spread devastation around, until he failed in an attack on Bebbanburgh, when he retired with his army into his own country.

* *BEDÆ Eccles. Hist.*, lib. iii., cap. 21.

Oswy, the brother of Oswald, was his successor on the throne of Northumbria. Having assumed the government, he had scarcely time to restore order to the distracted country, when he heard that Penda was preparing to repeat his invasion. This furious chief, at the age of eighty, was insatiable of slaughter. After having slain five monarchs, he still burned to add to the number. Oswy trembled at the threatened conflict, and hastened to propitiate the veteran destroyer by the offer of large gifts. Penda was inexorable. Refusing to listen to any accommodation, and determined to extirpate the nation, he commenced his march.

On hearing this resolution, Oswy said, "If the Pagan will not accept of our gifts, let us offer them to Him that will, the Lord our God." He then vowed that if he should be victorious, he would dedicate his daughter to the Lord in holy virginity, and give twelve farms to build monasteries. Penda, confident from his past successes, and the immense superiority of his army, rushed into the conflict. Oswy, assisted by his son Alfred, met and sustained the attack. Penda fell, and thirty commanders who fought in his army perished with him. The country happening at that time to be partially overflowed, more of his troops perished by the waters than by the sword.

The death of Penda, which took place near Leeds, produced the happiest results to England. The greatest and last Pagan power had now passed away. Mercia, weakened by this unexpected disaster, fell immediately into the hands of Oswy, who gave to his brother-in-law, Peada, the government of the Southern Mercians.* An opportunity was thus afforded for extending the benign influence of the Gospel over this part of the country ; so that it was introduced into all the Saxon kingdoms, except Sussex, which received the faith about eighteen years afterward. From this period, although subject to a succession of opposition and even

* It will give some idea of the real state of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, even at the time now under review, nearly two hundred years after Hengist's arrival, if we announce that when Penda fell, Mercia, South and North together, contained but twelve thousand families.—*Vide* BEDÆ *Eccles. Hist.*, lib. iii., cap. 24.

reverses, the influence of Christianity over the public mind gradually increased, until the people, as well as their rulers and teachers, had fully renounced Paganism, and become professors of the Christian faith. The following table gives a chronological account of the introduction of Christianity into the several Saxon kingdoms.

	A.D.
KENT. The mission of Augustine	597
ESSEX. Christianity introduced by Mellitus	604
———— restored by Cedda, bishop of Tilbury	653
NORTHUMBRIA. The Gospel preached by Paulinus	627
———— revived by the Scots	635
EAST ANGLIA. Felix, a Burgundian, assisted by Furseus, an Irish monk, introduced the Gospel	631
WESSEX. Christianity preached by Birinus of Genoa	633
MERCIA and the MIDDLE ANGLES. The Gospel successfully preached by the Scots and Britons	653
SUSSEX. The Gospel preached by Wilfrid	681

Before this chapter is closed, it will be necessary to speak more particularly of some circumstances to which only a passing allusion has been hitherto made.

Among the household of king Edwin, who were baptized at the same time with him, was a grand-niece of his, called Hilda. Although at the early age of thirteen, her reception of Christianity appears to have been sincere.

When Paulinus fled into Kent on the death of Edwin, and the nation returned to idolatry, this princess probably retired for a season, perhaps into East Anglia. On the accession of Oswald and the mission of Aidan, she returned to Northumbria; and, at the age of thirty-three, devoted herself to a life of celibacy. At first she settled on the banks of the Wear, where she founded a small nunnery. Thence she removed towards the mouth of the Tees, and became abbess of Heruteu, or Heorta.* This event took place about the

* The present Hartlepool.

year of our Lord 650. Here she remained for seven years, intent on the duties of her office, and maintaining a high character for piety and wisdom. Aidan and his brethren assisted her much by their counsels and instructions ; for they all respected and loved her, and paid frequent visits to her monastery.*

At length an unexpected circumstance gave lady Hilda a much more prominent position. It will be remembered that, as we have already stated, king Oswy, when marching to encounter the formidable Penda, vowed that if he came off victorious, he would dedicate his daughter to the Lord in holy virginity, and give twelve farms to build monasteries. After his brilliant victory over his dreaded enemy on the banks of the Aire, Oswy remembered his vow, and committed his infant daughter, the princess Elfleda, then scarcely a year old, to the care of lady Hilda, who appears also to have received a large portion of the promised property, for the benefit of the monastery in which the royal infant was to reside.

Two years after this event, lady Hilda purchased ten hides of land at a place called Streoneshalh, (the present Whitby,) where she erected a new monastic institution, to which, with her royal charge and many other nuns, she soon after removed. These circumstances, and especially the immense wealth placed at Hilda's disposal, invested this nunnery and its noble abbess with very considerable dignity ; while her pious and consistent character tended still farther to exalt her in the estimation of the surrounding population. Hence the monastery of Whitby became the most celebrated in Britain. Many important public transactions took place here. The king and queen appear to have frequently visited the princess ; and several daughters of the nobility joined this religious sisterhood. So that this establishment was not only famous as a monastic institution, but its history, to a considerable extent, became associated with the public annals of the period.

In this manner was the knowledge of Christianity brought

* YOUNG'S "History of Whitby Abbey," vol. i., p. 140.

to the several Saxon kingdoms. If it had been the pure, unadulterated religion of the Gospel, nothing could be more delightful than a review of such evangelical success. But we must remember what has been said of pre-existent error ; and bear in mind that, in all the varied acts and ministrations of the Roman missionaries, the inventions of men were incorporated, more or less, with the Gospel of Christ ; and that the results, although on the whole favourable to the interests of humanity, were far less so than they would have been, had the revealed word of God been maintained as the only standard of the truth, and the Holy Spirit been listened to as the great Teacher of the church.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RELIGION OF THE SAXON AND BRITISH CHURCHES,
UNTIL THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ROMISH UNIFORMITY.

THE existence of dissension and dispute between the Romish missionaries, who came over to propagate Christianity among the Anglo-Saxons, on the one hand, and the British and Scotch churches, on the other, has been already noticed. It would be pleasing and profitable, if we had the means of investigating fully and fairly the points of difference between them, and of ascertaining the religious state of each. But the only materials which would enable us to perform this task, have long since perished. We must, therefore, be content to direct attention to a few particulars, which, applied to both these Christian communities, may at least cast some light upon their characters and their quarrels.

Christianity professes to be founded on the revealed truth of God. It appeals to the Scriptures ; and must always be pure or impure, according to its agreement with, or departure from, their sacred teaching. So long, therefore, as we have the means of ascertaining to what extent any church makes the Bible its rule, we have at least one means of testing its purity.

In reference to this particular, although our information has come down to us through those who were partial to the Romish ministers, the advantage is evidently in favour of the Britons and Scots. In none of the various disputes which arose do we hear Augustine or his successors complain, that the Britons had adopted unscriptural opinions or practices. Quite the contrary. Even the testimony of their enemies proves that the differences which existed arose from the Britons adhering to the letter of Scripture, and rejecting the paramount authority claimed for canons and decrees.

Before entering upon the discussion of those passages in

ancient writings which immediately relate to this period, we may notice the remarkable language used by Chrysostom in an earlier age: "Although thou didst go unto the ocean, and those British isles, thou shouldest hear all men every where discoursing matters out of *the Scripture*; with another voice, indeed, but not with another faith; and with a different tongue, but with an according judgment." This language, proceeding from such a person, cannot be considered mere unmeaning compliment. It implies that our country was early celebrated, even in the East, for its acquaintance with Scripture; an opinion which is confirmed by Bede, who, speaking of the Britons of his own time, says, "This island at present, following the number of the books in which the divine law was written, contains five nations, —the English, Britons, Scots, Picts, and Latins, each in its own peculiar dialect cultivating the study of divine truth. *The Latin tongue is, by the study of the Scriptures, become common to all the rest.*" *

This passage distinctly intimates that the native Christians, whether Britons, Scots, or Picts, were so devoted to the study of the Scriptures, that, not having versions of them in their own languages, they learned the Latin tongue, in order to acquire scriptural knowledge. When it is remembered that, for several generations before the time of Bede, these three nations had scarcely any intercourse with the Latins, and that, even at the period of which we are treating, unlike the Anglo-Saxons, they had no sympathy with the Romish missionaries; this testimony affords very important evidence of the scriptural knowledge acquired by the British Christians.

The same author, speaking of the successors of Columba, says, "It is true, they followed uncertain rules in the observance of the great festival, as having none to bring them the synodal decrees for the observance of Easter, by reason of their being so far away from the rest of the world. Wherefore they only practised such works of piety and chastity as they could learn from the prophetic, evan-

* BEDÆ *Eccles. Hist.*, lib. i., cap. 1.

gelical, and apostolical writings." * The same sentiments are repeated, with respect to Aidan and his companions : " All those who bore him company," says the venerable writer, " whether they were shorn monks or laymen, were employed in meditation, that is, either in reading the Scriptures, or learning psalms. This was the daily employment of himself and all that were with him, wheresoever they went."

It is to be remarked, that Bede not only asserts this, but, as if to direct special attention to the neglect of this duty in his own church and time, adds, This " course of life was so different from the slothfulness of our times." Yet the subject of his commendation dissented from the opinions and practices of the Romish communion ; and the candid historian, while writing the very honourable character, and recording the " meekness, piety, and moderation " of Aidan, observes, that he was " zealous in the cause of God, though *not altogether* according to knowledge." And why this qualifying limitation ? Simply because " he was wont to observe Easter after the manner of his country," and not at the time prescribed by the Romish ritual. By the same author, Aldfrid, king of Northumberland, is called " a man most learned in the Scriptures." " So, when we read in the same Bede of Furseus, and in another ancient author of Kilianus, that ' from the time of their very childhood ' they had a care to learn the holy Scriptures ; it may easily be collected that in those days it was not thought a thing unfit, that even children should give themselves to the study of the Scriptures." †

Now though, as we have already observed, nearly all our information is derived from those who were as decidedly partial to Rome as they were hostile to the native Christians of Britain ; we have no evidence of such attention to the sacred records on the part of the ministers or people of the former church. Of them the reverse is true. If we hear of the Bible being among them, it is the rich binding or gorgeous

* BEDÆ *Eccles. Hist.*, lib. iii., cap. 4.

† USHER'S " Religion of the Ancient Irish," chap. i.

illumination of the sacred volume that is spoken of, rather than the personal study of its contents.

It is equally clear that the rites of the native Christians were much more simple than those practised by the Romish churches. That the manner of administering the sacrament of baptism among the Britons differed from that practised in the Anglo-Saxon church of that day, is certain, from the fact that one of the demands made by Augustine on the British clergy was, "that they should perform the ministry of baptism according to the custom of the church of Rome." And an authority that will scarcely be disputed, clearly intimates that a similar difference existed with respect to the manner of celebrating the Lord's supper; for Gildas alleges, that the "Britons were contrary to the whole world, and enemies to the Roman customs, as well in their *mass*, as in their tonsure." * When this information is taken in connexion with the well-ascertained facts, that, prior to this time, the church of Rome had associated various Heathenish rites with their most solemn observances, and that Gregory had actually recommended a similar compromising policy to the heads of the English church; we shall not hesitate to impute these differences between the Romish and the native Christians to the greater simplicity and purity of the latter.

Another point which presses itself on our attention is, the character and assumption of the clergy, with respect to distinction, aggrandizement, and power.

On the part of the British and Scotch ministers, a careful investigation of their whole history detects in them nothing like an ambition for earthly honour. They appear to have lived in intimate and friendly union with the people of their charge. The evidence which Bede incidentally supplies on this point is important, while recording the discussion between the British ministers and Augustine at their first meeting. On that occasion, when the Britons were pressed to adopt the customs and rites of the Romish church, their answer was, "that they could not depart from their

* USHER's "Religion of the Ancient Irish," chap. iv.

ancient customs, without the consent and leave of their people." *

The account of their entire deportment coincides with this unostentatious declaration. Of Colman, when he was compelled, by the decision of the synod of Whitby in favour of the Roman ritual, to retire to Scotland, the same historian says, "The place which he governed shows how frugal he and his predecessors were. For there were very few houses, beside the church, found at their departure ; indeed, no more than were barely sufficient for their residence. They had also no money, but cattle ; for if they received any money from rich persons, they immediately gave it to the poor ; there being no need to gather money, or provide houses for the entertainment of the great men of the world ; for such never resorted to the church, except to pray and hear the word of God. The king himself, when opportunity offered, came only with five or six servants ; and, having performed his devotions in the church, departed. But if they happened to take a repast there, they were satisfied with only the plain and daily food of the brethren, and required no more. For the whole care of those teachers was to serve God, not the world ; to feed the soul, not the belly." †

We discern a similar spirit in another minister of the same school. Ceadda had been appointed to the bishopric of Northumbria ; only two British bishops having assisted at his consecration, it was considered irregular by the Saxon church. At first in Mercia, and afterward at York, this pious minister evinced his humble spirit and labouring zeal. He travelled on foot through his diocess, preaching the Gospel in every quarter ; the town and the country, the castle and the cottage, alike enjoyed the blessings of his ministrations. When he had any spare time from his labours in the word and doctrine, it was occupied in reading and praying with a select company of his brethren in the ministry.‡ Yet when Theodore, who had been appointed

* *BEDÆ Eccles. Hist.*, lib. ii., cap. 2.

† *Ibid.*, lib. iii., cap. 26.

‡ *Ibid.*, lib. iv., cap. 3.

archbishop, visited York, he upbraided this man with the uncanonicalness of his consecration ; to which, instead of indignant resistance, Ceadda meekly replied : “ If that be the case, I willingly resign the office ; for, indeed, I never thought myself worthy of it, but only consented to take it at the command of others.” He, however, suffered himself to be prevailed on to submit to another consecration, in what was considered an orthodox manner, and thus continued in an extensive sphere of usefulness until his death.

We think that every candid reader of the history of the mission of Augustine and his successors, will admit that their spirit and character were totally different from those which the preceding extracts exhibit. Even a very rapid and cursory recapitulation of a few leading incidents will prove this. Scarcely had the first Romish missionary established himself in Kent, before he travelled into France, for the purpose of being consecrated metropolitan of the English nation ; * and having returned, he wrote to Gregory the Great for instruction on several points of discipline and practice. On these we have not offered any remarks ; indeed, the extreme indelicacy of several of the questions and replies would quite forbid our transcribing either. We may, however, observe, that none of these inquiries relate to vital or experimental Christianity. They refer to external observances, to the limits which consanguinity prescribes to lawful marriage, to questions of right and precedency affecting bishops and clergy, and other subjects to which we can only allude. None of them have respect to the spiritual ignorance of the Saxons, or to the difficulty of leading them to repent of their sins, and believe in Christ ; in a word, none of them have for their subject the great and essential doctrines of experimental or practical godliness.

While these important points are forgotten, it is anxiously inquired, “ How are we to deal with the bishops of France and Britain ? ” To which the bishop of Rome replied : “ We give you no authority over the bishops of France, because the bishop of Arles received the pall in ancient times from

* COLLIER’S “ Ecclesiastical History,” vol. i., p. 157.

my predecessor; but, as for all the bishops of Britain, we commit them to your care, that the unlearned may be taught, the weak strengthened by persuasion, and the perverse corrected by authority." * This communication of pretended apostolic power furnishes a curious illustration of the massacre at Bangor; and proves that, whatever apologies may now be offered for this monstrous assumption, or however it may be denied, the bishop of Rome did at this time *claim authority*, not only over the mission to the Saxons, but also over "all the bishops of Britain."

The conduct of Augustine, in his conferences with the heads of the British church, is quite in accordance with these unreasonable and arrogant pretensions; and the manner in which Bede records it, shows the importance that was attached to this question by the early Saxon church. This author, who is proverbial for his candour, after having given an account of the destruction of the monks of Bangor, adds: "Thus was fulfilled the prediction of the holy bishop Augustine,—that those perfidious men might feel the vengeance of temporal death, because *they had despised the offer of eternal salvation*." Does not this language clearly evince that, even at this time, the rejection of Romish supremacy was considered equivalent to "despising the offer of eternal salvation?" Thus early was the Anglo-Saxon church taught, that complete submission to priestly power was essential to the attainment of everlasting life.

The whole history of the progress of the Roman mission speaks the same language. Phocas having declared Boniface universal bishop, Laurentius felt emboldened to proceed more openly and daringly than his predecessor Augustine had done in claiming entire spiritual dominion. Not confining his attention to Britain, he even sent to the Scots of Ireland, demanding their submission to his authority, as the representative of the apostolic see. Bede has given us the commencement of this epistle; and, as it affords some curious information, we transcribe it:—

"To our most dear brothers, the lord bishops or abbots

* *BEDÆ Eccles. Hist.*, lib. i., cap. 27.

throughout all Scotland, Laurentius, Mellitus, and Justus, servants of the servants of God. When the apostolic see, according to the universal custom which it has followed elsewhere, sent us to these western parts to preach to Pagan nations, we came into this island, which is called Britain, without possessing any previous knowledge of its inhabitants. We held both the Britons and Scots in great esteem for sanctity, believing that they had proceeded according to the custom of the universal church. But, becoming acquainted with the errors of the Britons, we thought the Scots had been better; but we have been informed by bishop Dagan, coming into this aforesaid island, and the abbot Columbanus in France, that the Scots in no way differ from the Britons in their behaviour. For bishop Dagan, coming to us, not only refused to eat with us, but even to take his repast in the same house where we were entertained."

The historian adds: "The same Laurentius and his fellow-bishops wrote a letter to the priests of Britain, *suitable to his rank*, by which he endeavoured to confirm them in catholic unity; but what he gained by so doing, the present times still declare." All this is sufficiently intelligible. Bede, an ardent admirer of the Roman church, writes with great caution; but it is sufficiently evident, that by "catholic unity" we are to understand submission to the claims which Augustine and his successors had put forth. This also explains Laurentius's writing in a manner "suitable to his rank." Hence Milner, while giving Laurentius credit for sincerity, diligence, and zeal, admits that "he trod in the steps of his predecessor," and "was actuated by the same principle of selfish ambition." We have, also, reason to believe that this passionate love of power and distinction produced its usual fruit of corruption; for Bede informs us that Wine, who had been expelled from the bishopric of Winchester, took refuge with Wulffhere, king of the Mercians, "of whom he *purchased for money* the see of the city of London, and remained bishop thereof till his death." *

Another and still more important particular, respecting

* *BEDÆ Eccles. Hist.*, lib. iii., cap. 7.

which we should desire precise information, is, the real evangelical usefulness of those churches. All our preceding observations have been written under the conviction that the external apparatus of a Christian church may exist, with little or no real Christianity. Noble and gorgeous buildings may be raised, a princely hierarchy may be appointed, solemn services and ceremonies may be regularly performed, and an outward and general profession of Christianity may be maintained, where the truth of God is buried beneath the inventions and corruptions of men; where little or no efforts are made to convince the people of the evil of sin, and to exhibit the blessed privileges of the Gospel; and where, consequently, the triumphs of grace in the conversion of sinners, and the displays of divine influence to comfort, support, and direct believers, are scarcely ever recognised or enjoyed.

Yet it is a melancholy fact, that while, respecting the former class of circumstances, our information is ample, the vital realities of the latter are lost in oblivion. The Christian turns back his eye over preceding ages, and sees ornamented temples rising in every direction. He has abundant intelligence respecting the ordination of priests and the consecration of bishops. He is told whether the civil powers do homage to the claims of prelates, and where the scattered bones of martyrs and saints are deposited. But whether human spirits are emancipated from the thralldom of sin, raised from darkness to light, and thus brought to experience the divine favour, and to walk in fellowship with God, or whether they pass on in carnal security and spiritual blindness, until death arrests them, we are not apprised. Respecting these all-important points we must diligently scrutinize, in order to obtain even the smallest measure of knowledge.

The early Anglo-Saxon church does not in these respects present a cheering object to the contemplation of the real Christian. For although it assailed and destroyed Saxon Paganism, and introduced very considerable knowledge of Christianity as a system; yet there is reason to fear, that

the operation and influence of the errors which existed in the Romish church were such as greatly to limit, if not almost entirely to prevent, its being instrumental in disseminating any tolerable measure of experimental and practical godliness.

This is very manifest from the general tenor of Bede's History, who was, there is every reason to believe, to some extent, a partaker of spiritual religion; yet, in recording the progress of the Romish mission, what does he say respecting that inward and outward holiness which the Scriptures exhibit as the Gospel of Christ? Among the numerous cases which he adduces, when does he speak of religion apart from sacramental efficacy, or as resulting from an acquaintance with Gospel truth, and an experience of redemption through faith in the blood of Christ? He often refers to the new birth; but he places it in immediate relation to baptism. Hence we read of "the regeneration of holy baptism;" of "having received the faith and the washing of regeneration;" of being born again by water and the Holy Ghost, and the "washing of salvation," "washed with the water of absolution." The Lord's supper is referred to in a similar way; and the profession of religion in general is described as "taking upon you the sign of the holy cross, by which the human race is redeemed."

Other phrases clearly show that the errors of which we have previously treated, had been brought into practical operation. If we admit that the expressions given above might with propriety be used, in describing an introduction into the Christian church, and an experience of Gospel privileges; we must allow that this can only be the case when the introduction and experience are personal and real, not merely ceremonial and formal. If a person fully instructed in the great doctrines of revealed truth, under a deep spiritual concern to obtain the forgiveness of sins, should be baptized with water in the name of the Holy Trinity, and at the same time should be also baptized with the Holy Ghost; then we might speak of the "regeneration of holy baptism," and of "the washing of salvation."

We would fain hope that some such cases occurred in the ministrations of the Anglo-Saxon church. There is, however, reason to fear, that this inward, this spiritual baptism was seldom experienced in connexion with the administration of the outward rite. The careless haste so frequently manifested by the first missionaries to enrol members of the church, sufficiently proves this. When, for instance, we read that Paulinus spent thirty-six days in catechizing and baptizing crowds of people, there can be little hope that those individuals were all properly instructed and spiritually enlightened.

Camden, when recording this circumstance, says, "The archbishop, after he had consecrated the river Swale, ordered, by the criers and principal men, that they should with faith go in two and two, and, in the name of the Holy Trinity, baptize each other. Thus were they all regenerate, by as great a miracle as once the people of Israel passed over the divided sea, and Jordan, when it was turned back."* Thus, he says, were "baptized above ten thousand men, beside an infinite number of women and children," in a single day.

Notwithstanding all this parade of success, so little confidence had Paulinus in the Christianity of this people, that on the defeat and death of Edwin he immediately abandoned the country, and fled into Kent. We only add, on this branch of the subject, the following observations, from the pen of an author who has studied this history as a scholar and as a Christian :—

"The missionaries from Iona and their disciples appear to have surpassed the Romanists in piety and diligence, as much as they fell short of them in superstition. One historian takes pleasure in recording their zeal, their humility, and their unwearied labours; he recurs to these topics again and again, and sets forth their activity and self-denial, to reprove the indolence and selfishness of some of their successors. These pious servants of Christ were far from seeking to make a gain of godliness; they had not learned to

* CAMDEN'S "Britannia," p. 131. Folio. London, 1695.

set a price on every act of devotion, and to limit their services by the extent of their emoluments; but with disinterested zeal they laboured 'in season and out of season,' and thought no exertions too great by which they could profit the souls of men. They had not learned to confine their ministrations to consecrated walls, on pretence of conducting them with greater decorum,—a pretence which serves well as a cloak for indolence; but, like the primitive apostles, they preached and exhorted from village to village, and from house to house.

“After their departure, the church of Northumbria soon began to decline. Its worship, indeed, became more splendid, its clergy more pompous, and its religious buildings more neat and commodious; but it was sadly defective in the superior ornaments of piety and goodness. There might, indeed, be many worthy characters in the church of Rome at that period; for it was not half so corrupt as it afterward became; yet it is very obvious, from the statements of Bede, that an ambitious, worldly, and selfish spirit prevailed in that church to a much greater degree than among the Scottish clergy.” *

As it is so generally believed that the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were converted to Christianity by the labours of Roman missionaries, it is necessary to investigate not only the character of their religion, but also the extent to which they were successful in its promulgation. In Kent they appear to have laboured alone. Into Wessex, at the beginning, an Italian minister introduced the Gospel; although there is reason to believe that he was greatly assisted in his endeavours by native labour and influence.† Essex, after being first evangelized by Mellitus from Rome, again relapsed into idolatry, and was recovered by a native ministry. The same was the case with Northumbria. In East Anglia an Irish monk was an important coadjutor of Felix; while Mercia and the Middle Angles were the fruits of the missionary efforts of the Scots. So that, notwithstanding the conti-

* YOUNG'S "History of Whitby Abbey," vol. i., p. 172.

† COLLIER'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 231.

mental influence, authority, and means with which the Romish missionaries were favoured, they did, after all, comparatively little toward the evangelization of Saxon Britain, whether the results be estimated according to their character, or with respect to their extent.

On this subject a writer, every way competent to form a just opinion, says, "The Anglo-Saxons, it should be remembered, were chiefly converted by native missionaries, decried, indeed, by Augustine's party as schismatics, but who seem to have used a less superstitious ritual than that imported from abroad." And again: "Our forefathers, you will bear in mind, were not generally converted, as many would fain represent, by Roman missionaries. The heralds of salvation, who rooted Christianity in most parts of England, were trained in native schools of theology, and were attached firmly to those national usages which had descended to them from periods of the most venerable antiquity."*

We have, indeed, a striking instance of the extent of Romish success in our island, in the fact, that, sixty-three years after the arrival of Augustine, when all the Saxon kingdoms, with the single exception of Sussex, had received the faith, Wine, bishop of Winchester, was the only prelate of the Romish communion in the island. Consequently, when he had to consecrate Chad bishop of Northumbria, he took two British bishops as his coadjutors in that office. What, then, became of the boasted successors of Augustine and Laurentius? Does it not appear that, notwithstanding the pompous mission of Augustine, Christianity was kept alive, even in England among the Anglo-Saxons, by means of the Scots and Britons? So limited was the amount of success which the divine blessing vouchsafed to the labours of the boasted apostle of England! But God raised up other men, more worthy than he and his agents, to diffuse religion through this country. †

Yet, however limited in their usefulness, the Romish missionaries possessed great power. Recommended as

* SOAMES' "Bampton Lecture," pp. 112, 257.

† HUGHES' *Horæ Britannicæ*, vol. ii., p. 818.

they were by the bishop of Rome, (who had at this period acquired great political influence,) and supported by the patronage and favour of continental kings, they came in a peculiar way accredited to the Saxon sovereigns. They seem to have made the fullest use of this advantageous position ; for we find them attending the several kings, and acting as chaplains to their courts. This continual personal and religious intercourse, connected as it was with the other circumstances to which we have referred, gave them a political influence and an amount of power which the native ministers neither possessed nor desired.

This power was regarded as the means to an end. Gregory had given Augustine authority over the bishops of Britain. This, however, had not been recognised ; yet it had not been lost sight of by the successors of the Roman missionary, and a favourable opportunity was seized for attempting to carry it into accomplishment.

From what has been already said, it is indubitable, that Northumbria, which was almost entirely supplied with ministers from the Scots of Iona, presented the greatest obstacle to the grasping efforts of the Roman prelates. This state of things continued during the time that Aidan and his successor Finan were bishops. The latter especially appears to have been a man remarkable for energy of character ; and although several warm disputes took place, he still maintained the usages which had always been practised by the native Christians. Finan was succeeded by Colman. He was distinguished rather for piety than spirit, and his accession to the government of the Northumbrian church was chosen as the most suitable season to make an effort to establish Roman ascendancy.

Not only did the character of Colman render this time opportune for effecting the ambitious objects of the Roman priests ; other circumstances contributed to aid their design. Like his predecessor, king Oswy favoured the Scots ; but his queen, Eanfleda, having been brought up in Kent, had one of the Romish clergy for her chaplain, and of course followed the order of that church. The Romish cause obtained another

powerful supporter in prince Alchfrid, who now reigned over Deira. Having formed an intimate friendship with Wilfrid, a learned and energetic priest, Alchfrid had, under his influence, adopted the Roman cause. Nor should we forget the venerable deacon James, who had come into this part of the country with Paulinus, and who employed all his energy to promote the ascendancy of that church with which he was connected.

It appears that, although the church of Northumbria had long been governed, and, indeed, almost entirely reared, by the evangelical labours of the Scots, they did not at all interfere with any of the usages or regulations which were introduced by ministers of the Romish communion. These were at liberty to hold their sacred festivals according to their own opinions, and to practise all the rites peculiar to their church. But this was not sufficient. The Roman priests, not satisfied with toleration, claimed superiority. This claim, however, was not put forth specifically and formally; but some of the principal points of difference between the two churches were selected for the purpose of enforcing a conformity to the customs and practice of Rome, in order thus to prepare the way for the universal establishment of her authority.

Of these points the principal were the time of keeping Easter, and the question of the tonsure. With respect to the first of them, the church of Rome never observed Easter till after the fourteenth day of the moon which followed the vernal equinox; so that their Easter Sunday could not be earlier than the fifteenth day of the moon, and might be as late as the twenty-first. With the British Christians, if the fourteenth day of the moon happened to be the first day of the week, it was kept as Easter Day; and, consequently, their Easter could not be later than the twentieth day of the moon. Hence it sometimes happened that while Oswy and his Scottish friends were keeping Easter, the queen, prince Alchfrid, and the Romans, were observing Palm Sunday, their Lent not being yet finished. The cause of this difference was, that "the Roman church followed the

Alexandrian cycle of nineteen years, (whence our golden number had its original,) as it was explained to them by Dionysius Exiguus ; this is still retained by the church of England and most others ; while the Britons were guided in their computation by the circle of eighty-four years, as taught by Sulpicius Severus." * The other chief subject of dissension was the tonsure. This was a particular form of shaving a part of the head, which the monks had adopted. The tonsure which the Romans contended for was, at first, the cutting the hair close at the crown of the head, and leaving a round or circle hanging downwards. This was supposed to represent the crown of thorns worn by the Saviour. Afterward cutting the hair close was not deemed sufficient ; but shaving a circular portion at the top of the head was adopted, thus making the tonsure stand out with great prominence. This mode had been dignified with the title of "St. Peter's tonsure ;" and as the Britons, instead of shaving the top of the head in a circular form, had adopted an oblong tonsure, extending across the forepart of the head from ear to ear, earnest and anxious efforts were used to make the adoption of the Roman practice general.

It is humiliating to be compelled to detail such causes, as dividing and distracting the professed church of Christ. Who, on reading them, would suppose that those who so clamorously contended for such trifles called themselves after the name of Him who lived and died to establish a religion which was not to consist in divers washings, ceremonies, meats, or drinks, but "in the hidden man of the heart," in being "created anew in righteousness and true holiness ?"

Still these disputes were carried on with increasing violence, until at length a mode was resorted to that placed the settlement of the entire subject at the disposal of the sovereign. King Oswy convened a synod, which was held in the abbey at Whitby, A.D. 664. At the appointed time, Colman, with his clergy and lady Hilda, appeared on the part of the Scots ; and prince Alchfrid, bishop Agelbert,

* USHER'S "Religion of the Ancient Irish," chap. ix.

with several of the Roman clergy, on the other side; while the venerable Cedd, bishop of Essex, acted as moderator of the synod, and mediator between the parties.

At the opening of the assembly, king Oswy made a short speech, showing the importance of unity in the church. “‘They who serve one God,’ said he, ‘should hold one rule of life; and they who expect the same heavenly kingdom, ought not to differ in the celebration of the divine mysteries; but rather to inquire which was the truest tradition, that the same might be followed by all.’ He then commanded his bishop, Colman, first to declare what the custom was which he observed, and whence it derived its origin.”*

This prelate then rose, and said, “The Easter which I keep, I received from my elders, who sent me bishop hither. All our forefathers, men beloved of God, are known to have kept it in the same manner; and that the same may not seem to be contemptible, or worthy to be rejected, it is the same which St. John the evangelist, the disciple beloved of our Lord, with all the churches over which he presided, is recorded to have observed.”

Colman having spoken more to the same effect, the king desired Agelbert to produce the authority which warranted the keeping of Easter after the manner of the Romish church. This prelate had been bishop of the West Saxons; but having taken offence, because the king had divided his diocess, and appointed another bishop to take charge of one part of it, he had retired to France, and was at this time bishop of Paris. In reply to the command of the king, Agelbert requested that his disciple, the priest Wilfrid, might be allowed to speak in his stead, as Wilfrid perfectly agreed with him in opinion on those ecclesiastical traditions, and, from his perfect acquaintance with the English language, was much better qualified to bring those opinions before the synod.

Then Wilfrid, being ordered by the king to speak, said, “The Easter which we observe, we saw celebrated by all at Rome, where the blessed apostles, Peter and Paul, lived, taught, suffered, and were buried. We saw the same done

* *BEDÆ Eccles. Hist.*, lib. ii., cap. 25.

in Italy and in France, when we travelled through those countries for pilgrimage and prayer. We found the same practised in Africa, Asia, Egypt, Greece, and all the world, wherever the church of Christ is spread abroad, through several nations and tongues, at one and the same time; except only these and their accomplices in obstinacy; I mean, the Picts and the Britons, who foolishly, in these two remote islands of the world, and only in part even of them, oppose all the rest of the universe."

To this arrogant and insulting harangue, which sufficiently indicates the haughty, overbearing temper by which the Roman party were distinguished, Colman replied: "It is strange that you will call our labours foolish, wherein we follow the example of so great an apostle, who was thought worthy to lay his head on our Lord's bosom, when all the world knows him to have lived most wisely."

To which Wilfrid answered: "Far be it from us to charge John with folly; for he literally observed the precepts of the Jewish law, whilst the church still Judaized in many points, and the apostles were not able at once to cast off all the observances of the law which had been instituted by God. In which way it is necessary that all who come to the faith should forsake the idols which were invented by devils, that they might not give scandal to the Jews that were among the Gentiles. For this reason it was that Paul circumcised Timothy, that he offered sacrifice in the temple, that he shaved his head with Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth,—for no other advantage than to avoid giving scandal to the Jews. Hence it was that James said to the same Paul, 'You see, brother, how many thousands of the Jews have believed; and they are all zealous for the law.' And yet, at this time, the Gospel spreading throughout the world, it is needless, nay, it is not lawful, for the faithful either to be circumcised, or to offer up unto God sacrifices of flesh.

"So John, pursuant to the custom of the law, began the celebration of the feast of Easter, on the fourteenth day of the first month, in the evening, not regarding whether the same happened on a Saturday, or any other day. But when

Peter preached at Rome, being mindful that our Lord arose from the dead, and gave the world the hopes of resurrection, on the first day after the Sabbath, he understood that Easter ought to be observed, so as always to stay till the rising of the moon on the fourteenth day of the first moon in the evening, according to the custom and precepts of the law, even as John did. And when that came, if the Lord's Day, then called 'the first day after the Sabbath,' was the next day, he began that very evening to keep Easter, as we do at this day. But if the Lord's Day did not fall the next morning after the fourteenth moon, but on the sixteenth, or seventeenth, or any other moon till the twenty-first, he waited for that, and on the Saturday before, in the evening, began to observe the holy solemnity of Easter. Thus it came to pass that Easter was only observed from the fourteenth moon to the twenty-first.

"Nor does this evangelical tradition abolish the law, but rather fulfil it; the command being to keep the passover from the fourteenth moon of the first month in the evening, to the twenty-first moon of the same moon in the evening; which observance all the successors of St. John in Asia, since his death, and all the church throughout the world, have since followed. And that this is the true Easter, and the only one to be kept by the faithful, was not newly decreed by the council of Nice, but only confirmed afresh; as the church history informs us.

"Thus it appears, that you, Colman, neither follow the example of John, as you imagine, nor that of Peter, whose traditions you knowingly contradict; and that you neither agree with the law nor the Gospel in the keeping of Easter. For John, keeping the paschal time according to the decree of the Mosaic law, had no regard to the first day after the Sabbath; which you do not practise who celebrate Easter only on the first day after the Sabbath. Peter kept Easter Sunday between the fifteenth and the twenty-first moon; which you do not, but keep Easter Sunday from the fourteenth to the twentieth moon; so that you often begin Easter on the thirteenth moon in the evening; whereof

neither the law made any mention, nor did our Lord, the Author and Giver of the Gospel, on that day, but on the fourteenth, either eat the old passover in the evening, or deliver the sacraments of the New Testament to be celebrated by the church, in memory of His passion.

“Besides, in your celebration of Easter, you utterly exclude the twenty-first moon, which the law ordered to be principally observed. Thus, as I said before, you agree neither with John nor with Peter, neither with the law nor with the Gospel, in the celebration of the greatest festival.”

To this Colman rejoined: “Did Anatolius, a holy man, and much commended in church history, act contrary to the law and the Gospel, when he wrote, that Easter was to be celebrated from the fourteenth to the twentieth? Is it to be believed, that our most reverend Father Columb and his successors, men beloved by God, who kept Easter after the same manner, thought or acted contrary to the divine writings? Whereas there were many among them, whose sanctity is testified by heavenly signs and the working of miracles, whose life, customs, and discipline I never cease to follow, not questioning their being saints in heaven.”

“It is evident,” said Wilfrid, “that Anatolius was a most holy, learned, and commendable man; but what have you to do with him, since you do not observe his decrees? For he, following the rule of truth in his Easter, appointed a revolution of nineteen years; which either you are ignorant of, or if you know it to be kept by the whole church of Christ, yet you despise it. He so computed the fourteenth moon in the Easter of our Lord, that, according to the custom of the Egyptians, he acknowledged it to be the fifteenth moon, in the evening. So, in like manner, he assigned the twentieth to Easter Sunday, as believing that to be the twenty-first moon, when the sun had set. Which rule and distinction of his, it appears, you are ignorant of, in that you sometimes keep Easter before the full of the moon, that is, on the thirteenth day.

“Concerning your Father Columb and his followers, whose sanctity, you say, you imitate, and whose rules and

precepts you observe, which have been confirmed by signs from heaven, I can answer, that when many, on the day of judgment, shall say to our Lord, that in His name they 'prophesied, and cast out devils, and wrought many wonders,' our Lord will reply, that He 'never knew' them! But far be it from me, that I say so of your fathers; because it is much more just to believe what is good, than what is evil, of persons whom one does not know. Wherefore I do not deny those to have been God's servants, and beloved by Him, who, with rustic simplicity, but pious intentions, have themselves loved Him. Nor do I think that such keeping of Easter was very prejudicial to them, so long as none came to show them a more perfect rule; and yet I do believe that they, if any catholic adviser had come among them, would have as readily followed his admonitions as they are known to have kept those commandments of God which they had learned and knew. But as for you and your companions, you certainly sin, if, having heard the decrees of the apostolic see and of the universal church, and that the same is confirmed by holy writ, you refuse to follow them. For though your fathers were holy, do you think that their small number, in a corner of the remotest island, is to be preferred before the universal church of Christ, throughout the world? And if that Columb of yours (and, I may say, ours also, if he were Christ's servant) was holy and powerful in miracles, yet could he be preferred to the most blessed prince of the apostles? to whom our Lord said, 'Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and to thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven.'"

We have been careful to give an exact transcript of the account which Bede has preserved of this interesting debate. It is important and valuable on several accounts. Yet it can scarcely be doubted that a partiality for what he called "the catholic cause," influenced his judgment in the compilation of this part of his history. How few are the words of Colman, when compared with the lengthy harangues of

Wilfrid! It is not necessary that we should stay to notice the false premisses and erroneous statements advanced during this controversy; for the conclusion was not at all affected by this laboured argumentation.

We are told that "when Wilfrid had thus spoken, the king said, 'Is it true, Colman, that these words were spoken to Peter by our Lord?' He answered, 'It is true, O king.' Then says he, 'Can you show any such power given to your Columb?' Colman answered, 'None.' Then added the king, 'Do you both agree, that these words were principally directed to Peter, and that the keys of heaven were given to him by our Lord?' They both answered, 'We do.' Then the king concluded, 'And I also say unto you, that he is the door-keeper, whom I will not contradict, but will, as far as I know and am able, in all things obey his decrees; lest, when I come to the gates of the kingdom of heaven, there should be none to open them, he being my adversary who is proved to hold the keys.'" The historian concludes his statement by adding, "The king having said this, all present, both great and small, gave their assent; and, renouncing the more imperfect institution, resolved to conform to that which they found to be better."*

Thus the question was settled in Northumbria; and it will be observed, that this decision did not merely respect the proper time for holding Easter, but virtually established the supremacy of the church of Rome. It was not on the ground of scriptural argument, nor of uncorrupted tradition, that this judgment was given; but because an amount of spiritual authority and power was supposed to stand associated with the church of Rome, which it would be perilous to resist. This conclusion, also, did not proceed from any part of the church of Christ, as such; it resulted not from any well-informed judgment fairly balancing the questions at issue. It proceeded from the king, not considered as holding an important position in the church, but in his civil and individual capacity, and because his fears were acted

* *BEDÆ Eccles. Hist.*, lib. iii., cap. 25.

upon by the wildest misapprehension of a perverted passage of Scripture.

The effect of this award, therefore, as far as its influence extended, was to show that the personal salvation of individuals depended on a careful observance of every usage which the church of Rome chose to adopt and enforce. No other issue would have promoted the designs of the Roman party so fully as this. Hence the rapid and daring character of their future career.

The question of the tonsure was also intended to have been submitted to this meeting. On this subject Wilfrid was well prepared to speak, as he had himself received the true orthodox cut, when in France ; but as the proposal of Oswy, in which the assembly acquiesced, included the adoption of all the ordinances, or pretended ordinances, of St. Peter, without exception, there was no need of any further discussion, the Romish party having gained their point !

The immediate result of this decision at Whitby was the retirement of Colman from his charge. Unconvinced, as well he might be, and knowing that a change based on such principles must be fraught with imminent peril to the cause of real religion, he returned into Scotland with many of his brethren. Eata, his friend, was appointed his successor as abbot of Lindisfarne ; and Tuda, who was also his fellow-labourer, became bishop of Northumbria in his stead. Tuda's occupation of the see was very brief ; for he soon after died of a pestilence, which, to an awful extent, ravaged Britain at this period. Cedd, the pious bishop of Essex, was carried off by the same disease.

The further consequences which resulted from the adoption of Roman ecclesiastical discipline, and the virtual recognition of Roman supremacy, which had taken place at Whitby, were soon and very seriously manifested. Wilfrid, who had made himself so prominent in the debate on that occasion, was appointed bishop of York, by king Oswy, on the death of Tuda. Consistently with his extravagant partiality for Rome, he insisted on going thither for consecration. This ceremony, however, was not performed in the

imperial city, but at Compiègne in France, by Agelbert, bishop of Paris, assisted by several other prelates. Wilfrid stayed on the continent so long after his consecration, that Oswy sent Ceadda, brother of the deceased Cedd, to be consecrated to the vacant see. When Ceadda arrived at Canterbury, he found that Deusdedit, the archbishop, was dead: he then repaired to Wine, bishop of the West Saxons, who, assisted by two British bishops, performed the ceremony.

Meantime, on the death of Deusdedit, the kings of Kent and Northumberland conferred together on the importance of having the new archbishop of Canterbury so consecrated, that there might be no possibility of questioning the legitimacy of his official character, or his competency to consecrate bishops. They therefore selected one Wighard, a Kentish priest, whom they sent to Rome, that he might be properly inducted into the archi-episcopal dignity. This design was, however, frustrated, so far as Wighard was concerned; for he died of the plague before his consecration took place. Upon this, the pope appointed to the vacant office Theodore, a Greek, born in Tarsus, in Cilicia. In these transactions we see the operation of those principles of worldly policy which had for a long time affected the church of Rome, and which were now to be largely imported into Britain. Here we descry sovereigns interfering in the appointment of the most important spiritual functionary of the church; and then the pope, taking advantage of an accident, to usurp the same power, and to exercise it according to his own will.

Theodore was a person every way calculated to justify the choice which had been made, and to promote the objects which had been contemplated in his election. Before leaving Rome he obtained the true and exact tonsure; and, on arriving in England, A.D. 669, he was very favourably received by Egbert, king of Kent, and the other English princes, who all appear to have united in admitting his claims to metropolitan power. The first important act of his administration was a journey through the country, for the purpose of visiting all the churches, ascertaining their condition, and

bringing them all to a perfect conformity with Romish manners and usages.

In the mean time, Wilfrid, who had tarried long abroad, returned, and found Ceadda ordained bishop of York. He therefore made a further stay in Kent. Meantime, Theodore, pursuing his journey, came to York; and, hearing that two British bishops had assisted at Ceadda's consecration, he upbraided him with the uncanonicalness of his appointment. But knowing that he had conformed to the Roman mode of observing Easter, and being struck with his humble and tractable spirit, he induced him to submit to be consecrated again in a perfectly orthodox manner.

Notwithstanding this submission, and the evident piety and worth of Ceadda, the claims of Wilfrid to the bishopric of York were considered overwhelming. The appointment of the pope might in itself have been sufficient; but Wilfrid had personal recommendations of a high order. He was a man of great learning and energy; he was thoroughly *catholic*, in the Roman sense of the term; he had mainly contributed to the issue of the synod at Whitby Abbey; and, above all, he was, says Bede, "the first of the bishops of the English nation that had learned to deliver to the English churches the catholic mode of life." For he "by his doctrine brought into the English church many rules of catholic observance. Whence it followed, that the catholic institutions daily gained strength; and all the Scots that dwelt in England either conformed to these, or returned into their own country."* The person who could effect a consummation so much desired by the existing authorities, could have no competitor. Hence we soon after find Wilfrid bishop of York; and the pious Ceadda, notwithstanding his re-consecration, in retirement in the monastery at Lestingau.†

The archbishop Theodore, having visited the principal churches of England, called a council, which was held at Hertford A.D. 673. On this occasion the primate produced a copy of the canons, which he had brought from Rome,

* *BEDÆ Eccles. Hist.*, lib. iv., cap. 2; lib. iii., cap. 28.

† *Ibid.*, lib. iv., cap. 3.

and from which he selected the following as peculiarly necessary to be observed in England, in order to establish a perfect uniformity among all the churches:—

“ 1. That the festival of Easter might be uniformly kept, and the time fixed upon the first Sunday after the full moon of the first month.

“ 2. That every bishop should be contented with the government of his own people, and not invade a foreign diocess.

“ 3. That the monasteries should not be disturbed in their temporal concerns, nor have their property wrested from them by any of the bishops.

“ 4. That the monks should not have liberty to remove and ramble from one monastery to another, without leave from their abbot; but keep strictly to the terms of their engagement.

“ 5. That it should not be lawful for any of the clergy to desert their bishop; and that if any of that order came into another diocess, they should not be received without a recommendation under their own bishop's hand; and, in case any such person should be received, and refuse to return home upon invitation, both the entertainer and the person entertained shall be excommunicated.

“ 6. That bishops and other clergy that are strangers ought to be contented with a hospitable reception in their travels; and that none of them execute any part of their function without permission of the bishop of the diocess.

“ 7. That a synod should be convened twice a year.—But this form of the canon was, upon further consultation, altered to once a year. The 1st of August was to be the time, and Clofesho the place.

“ 8. That no bishop should set his pretensions above the rest of the order, but be governed in this respect by the priority of consecration.

“ 9. That new sees should be erected upon a further conversion of the country.—This canon was proposed, but not passed.

“ 10. That nobody should be allowed any further than

lawful marriage ; that no married person should disengage himself, unless upon the score of adultery ; and that if any one should part with his lawful wife, he ought to marry nobody else, but either be reconciled, or remain single." *

All these canons were unanimously passed except the ninth, which appears to have been withdrawn. In surveying these events under the influence of Christian feelings and principles, we are led to inquire, Were there no other, and more important, subjects for the consideration of a body of Christian ministers, on such an occasion as this? All opposition had been removed. England lay in the hands of the clergy who were in communion with Rome. It is evident that, at this period, but a small part of the entire population could have had Christian instruction. The proposed ninth canon shows that large districts were still immersed in Heathenism. Yet all the bishops, assembled together in solemn synod, find no opportunity to refer to the edification of the church, or the evangelization of the Heathen ! No allusion is made to the spiritual condition of the people or to their instruction ; no mention of the means necessary to promote the work of God among them !

The whole case tends to impress the mind with the opinion that at this time the clergy were considered as constituting the church, and the people were supposed to live for them, and not they for the people. Hence we find the time of the council taken up almost exclusively with matters which relate to the honours and privileges of the superior clergy. The property of the monasteries is secured from their rapacity ; they are forbidden to interfere in any diocess but their own ; and the most stringent rules are adopted to make the inferior clergy entirely dependent upon the bishops.

The events which immediately followed fully prove, that even all this careful policy was insufficient to prevent those worldly principles which had been introduced into the church from producing disorder and collision. The ninth canon, which the synod at Hertford rejected, was obviously the

* COLLIER'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 238.

most important. Nothing could be more reasonable than that when Heathen districts should be converted to the faith of Christ, more bishops should be appointed to take charge of the churches so formed. Nothing could be more equitable than that the existing bishoprics, which were generally co-extensive with the several kingdoms of the Heptarchy, should be divided, and the number of bishops be increased, as the great truths of the Gospel became more generally potential. The spiritual interests of the people, and the practice of the apostles and of the primitive church, alike called for such a measure. Yet this the synod refused to enact.

Notwithstanding this opposition, Theodore, in conjunction with Egfrid, king of Northumberland, resolved to divide the diocese of Northumbria; and Bosa and Eata were consecrated by the archbishop for different parts of the Northumbrian territories. As this diocese contained all the country between the Humber and the Frith of Forth, its division seems to have been a wise and necessary arrangement. Yet Wilfrid was far from consenting to the measure. He repaired to court; and, boldly accusing the king and archbishop of injustice, appealed from them to the pope: a threat at that time so new, that, we are told, the courtiers received it with a loud laugh. Wilfrid, however, soon convinced them that he was serious; for he immediately left the country, and repaired to Rome.

If this partition of the diocese had been carried into effect in a religious manner, it would have been honourable to the church, and have afforded some reason for believing that it still possessed a degree, however small, of spiritual influence and scriptural principle. But it was not so. Northumbria was not divided into several bishoprics because the religious wants of the people called for it, or because such an arrangement was necessary for their spiritual instruction. The measure arose from causes essentially earthly and corrupt. Wilfrid, from such an extensive diocese, realized an ample income. He lived in great state; so that his magnificence exceeded that of the reigning princes of his day. He appeared in public with a numerous retinue, mounted and

armed, and banqueted on a service of gold. This wealth and splendour excited the envy of Egfrid and Theodore; and in order to lessen the rival pomp of the bishop, not to benefit, or bless the people, the diocess was divided, and other prelates were appointed to take charge of the several parts.

On arriving at Rome, Wilfrid presented a petition, setting forth his grievances, to the pope in council, who, on this *ex-parte* statement, acquitted him from all charges, "certain and uncertain;" and immediately made a decree, restoring him to his see, and ordering those who had been thrust into it to be expelled. With this decree he hastened back into England, and delivered it to king Egfrid. On receiving the sealed document, the king called a council of his clergy and nobles. The decision of this assembly was, that "nothing could be more offensive and insulting to both the civil and ecclesiastical governors of the land, than the bringing over bulls from a foreign power to annul those acts which had been passed for the civil and religious advantage of the nation; and he who had done it deserved a punishment little less than capital." The king, therefore, by the advice of his council, ordered Wilfrid to be sent to prison. Thus it was proved, that, whatever religious respect might have been felt for the bishop of Rome by the Anglo-Saxon princes, the time had not yet arrived when his mandates were considered universally authoritative, and when princes on their thrones trembled at his frown.

After having lain in prison nearly a year, Wilfrid obtained his liberty through the intercession of Æbbe, the king's aunt, on condition of his immediately quitting the Northumbrian territories. Accordingly Wilfrid went into Mercia, where he intended to have built a monastery; but he had scarcely laid the foundation, when he was ordered to leave that kingdom. Thence he proceeded into Wessex; but, the report of his character having preceded him, the king, Ketwin, would not allow him to settle in any part of his dominions. Wilfrid then went into Sussex, which as yet had not been converted to Christianity. Here he met

with a kind reception from the king and queen, who were themselves acquainted with the doctrines of the Gospel, and anxious for the conversion of their Pagan subjects. At this time there happened to be a great scarcity of food in Sussex; and Wilfrid, by teaching the people a much more profitable mode of fishing, greatly contributed to alleviate their distress. This circumstance conduced to the success of his religious teaching, which being aided by his learning, eloquence, and insinuating address, great numbers of the people, and many of the nobility, were prevailed on to embrace the Christian faith.

Wilfrid's labours were rewarded by the king, who presented him with a considerable tract of country in the peninsula of Selsey, with all the cattle and slaves upon it. Here he built a monastery.* While Wilfrid was in those parts, he was the instrument, by the ministry of some of his followers, of converting the inhabitants of the Isle of Wight, and obtained a grant of the third part of that island from Ceadwalla, king of Wessex.

These successes appear to have regained Wilfrid the favour of Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, who recommended him to Ethelred, king of Mercia, and to Alchfrid, who had succeeded his brother Egfrid in the kingdom of Northumberland. This last prince, having no personal enmity against Wilfrid, permitted him to return into his dominions, A.D. 687, and bestowed upon him the bishopric of Hexham, which was then vacant; and to which (if we may believe Eddius, the writer of his Life) he afterwards added the see of York, and monastery of Ripon.† These dignities were far from satisfying this ambitious prelate. He not only refused to sign the canons of the councils of Hertford and Hatfield, but persisted in urging his claims to those immense revenues which he held when he possessed the entire bishopric of York, and had, besides, twelve abbeys under his government. At last Alchfrid, wearied with his turbulence, again expelled him from the country.

* *BEDÆ Hist. Eccles.*, lib. iv., cap. 13.

† HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. ii., p. 151.

About this time, A.D. 690, archbishop Theodore died, in the twenty-third year of his pontificate, and the eighty-ninth of his age. Theodore was certainly one of the greatest men that ever filled the chair of Canterbury. By his influence all the English churches were united and brought to a perfect uniformity in discipline and worship ; some of the large bishoprics were divided, and new ones erected ; great men were encouraged to build parish churches, by his declaring them and their successors patrons of those churches ; and a regular provision was made for the clergy, in all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, by the imposition of a certain tax. By these and other regulations, the clergy of the church of England became a regular and compact body, furnished with a considerable number of bishops and inferior clergy, all under the superintendence of the metropolitan, the archbishop of Canterbury.

Thus we have seen the progress of Roman domination until the establishment of uniformity in the ceremonies and discipline of the Anglo-Saxon church. The precise state of the question respecting the amount of authority which the pope claimed, and which the British churches allowed, may be gathered from the sequel of Wilfrid's history.

This bishop, having been a second time expelled from Northumbria, retired into Mercia, when he was put in possession of the vacant see of Leicester. Here he continued his complaints and efforts to regain the dignity and wealth of which he had been deprived. These proceedings requiring notice, a synod of bishops and abbots was held at Nesterfield, near Wath, in Yorkshire, A.D. 701. But Wilfrid, when called upon, instead of answering to the charge of having broken the laws of the church, treated such accusations with scorn ; and, assuming the air of a superior, asked the synod, how they dared for twenty-two years to oppose the papal power, by acting on the decrees of Theodore, in opposition to those of popes Agatho, Benedict, and Sergius. He positively refused either to subscribe the canons, or to submit to any trial or sentence, but what might be in favour of his own demands ; and declared, that if these

were not granted, he would again appeal to the pope. Incensed at this arrogance, the king would have visited him at once with condign punishment, had not the archbishop interposed, who had promised him a safe return to Mercia. Wilfrid was stripped of all his preferments, except the abbey of Ripon, inhibited from the exercise of his episcopal functions, and threatened, in case he persisted in his obstinacy, with excommunication.

Yet, undeterred by all this opposition, the hardy prelate again journeyed to Rome; and, having carefully drawn up a petition, addressed "To the apostolic lord, the thrice blessed and universal bishop, Pope John," he delivered it to the Roman pontiff. Wilfrid was very graciously received, and lodged and entertained, with all his followers, at the public expense. Notwithstanding the archbishop had sent deputies to Rome, preferring an accusation against Wilfrid, the conduct of the latter seems to have been held praiseworthy, rather than otherwise; for when the day for pronouncing the sentence arrived, the pope appeared in great state, surrounded by a council of bishops; and, both parties being present, he gave his judgment, reversing the decision of the synod of Nesterfield, and declaring Wilfrid entirely innocent of all the crimes laid to his charge. With this sentence he returned in triumph to England, was reconciled to Brightwald, archbishop of Canterbury, and kindly received by Ethelred, king of Mercia. But king Alchfrid and his successor, Eadwulf, refused to allow him to enter the Northumbrian kingdom.

After the short reign of Eadwulf, Osred, a child aged eight years, the son of Alchfrid, succeeded to the throne. Wilfrid thought this a favourable opportunity for renewing his claims to his former dignities and wealth. By his interest with the archbishop and with Berechfrid, who had now the chief direction of affairs in the Northumbrian kingdom, another council was called, for the settlement of those unhappy disputes which had agitated the church for nearly forty years.

This council was very numerous; and as all the company.

did not understand Latin, the archbishop, who opened the business, undertook to inform the meeting of the decision of the pope, and of the demand which was in consequence made upon them. "And here, having flourished a little upon the pope's authority, and the advantage of his succession from St. Peter, he told them, his holiness gave the Northumbrians the choice of two things: either to resign their sees to Wilfrid, and to leave him in possession of the ancient jurisdiction and extent of his diocese; or, in case they refused to drop the dispute upon those terms, which, in his opinion, were the most reasonable, then they were all to take a journey to Rome to be tried there, and put an end to the controversy in a more numerous synod. But if any person should be so unhappy as to slight this order, and reject the alternative, he was to be denied the sacrament of the eucharist, in case he was any of the laity; and to be degraded, if a priest or bishop. 'This,' says the archbishop, 'is the sum of his holiness's commands.'"*

To this the bishops replied, that they could see no reason to reverse their former decision; and urged, that the pope of Rome had no right to revoke the sentence of an English synod, and to lay commands on an English king. Yet, when pressed by Berechfrid and Elfreda, abbess of Whitby, sister to the late king Alchfrid, on the ground that it was the dying wish of that king that the apostolic see should be submitted to in this case, the synod so far complied with their desires, as to agree that, without conceding the authority of the papal decree, John of Beverley, bishop of Hexham, should be translated to the vacant see of York, and that Wilfrid should succeed him in the bishopric and abbey of Hexham, and together with them should have the abbey of Ripon restored to him. This synod was held A.D. 705, and Wilfrid died four years after.

These circumstances sufficiently exhibit the position of the Anglo-Saxon church at this period, with respect to the bishop of Rome. From them it is clear, that the see of Rome continued to claim the same unlimited power over the

* COLLIER'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 278.

English churches as it had exercised in the time of Augustine ; but that this power was not fully recognised by the Anglo-Saxon bishops and princes. Nevertheless the entire course of events was gradually breaking down this resistance, and thus bringing the English church under the same Romish influence in its government, which had already subdued all objections to the papal ritual and discipline.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LEARNING, DOCTRINES, AND PIETY OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH.

FROM what has been said in a preceding chapter, it will have been understood that the Saxons, on their first establishment in Britain, were almost wholly destitute of literature. The little which they possessed consisted entirely of minstrel poetry. Yet, emanating from a people so constituted and circumstanced as were the Saxons, this poetry “held a high rank, both by its comparative importance, and its own intrinsic beauties. Life itself, and the language of life, were in those early ages essentially poetic. Man lived and acted according to his impulses and passions. He was unacquainted with the business-like movements and feelings of more civilized existence. When he was not occupied in imitating the famous deeds of his forefathers, he listened to the words of the minstrel who celebrated them. The song in which were told the gigantic movements of an earlier period, already clothed in a traditionary garb of the supernatural, was the instrument to which his mind owed its culture. His very conversation was moulded upon it; and even in the transactions of the council he spake in poetry.” *

This poetry, at the same time that it exerted a potent influence on the living generation, was treasured up, and afforded motives and incentives to future ages. For while the minstrel sang the mythic history of the days of old, and clothed in verse the religious doctrines and traditions which he believed; he at the same time celebrated the noble deeds of his own generation, exhibited the coward or the vanquished enemy as an object of derision, lauded the brave, and extolled the nobility of his patrons. Thus a constantly-

* WRIGHT’S *Biographia Britannica Literaria*, p. 2. Published by the Royal Society of Literature. London, 1842.

increasing amount of popular poetic lore was received by the people, sung at their feasts, taught to their children, and handed down to posterity. Under these circumstances Christianity was introduced, and with it, as is always the case, a mighty impulse to mental cultivation.

The first effect of this was to create a school of religious poetry; to consecrate to the service of Christ, and to enlist in His cause, those powers and popular arts which had before been engaged in exhibiting the ferocities of their Heathen religion, or in celebrating the prowess of their heroes. For the minstrels found in Scripture history grander and more exciting events than even their mythology had imagined, and perceived that, as the principal nobles embraced Christianity, these subjects were received with a more lively interest than their former most favourite songs. They turned their attention to this new class of subjects; and the creation, the fall of the angels, the story of Judith or of Nebuchadnezzar, the most prominent doctrines of the Gospel, the day of judgment, and its awful results, were sung, sometimes in their original purity, and at other times not only embellished by the imagination of the poet, but tinged with native ideas, and even with native superstitions.

The most eminent of these poets was Cædmon. He was at first occupied in menial offices, and is even said to have been a cow-herd. If this be true, it shows the great prevalence of minstrels and song in the lowest Saxon society; more especially as we are told that he was originally so uninstructed in the poetic art, that "when the harp was moved towards him in the hall, where it was customary for each person to sing in turn, he was frequently obliged to hide his shame by retiring from the room." It was immediately after one of these occasions that he recited his first verses. The ability to compose was supposed, in perfect accordance with the spirit of the times, to have been miraculously communicated to him.

His first subject was the creation; and, after having been more fully instructed in the Scriptures, he appears, at the request of the abbess Hilda, to have purposed rendering the

whole sacred history into verse. According to Bede, "the poetry of Cædmon, as it existed in his (Bede's) time, treated successively of the whole history of Genesis, of the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, and their entrance into the Land of Promise, with many other histories taken out of holy writ; of the incarnation, passion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ; of the advent of the Holy Ghost, and of the doctrine of the apostles. He also made many poems on the terrors of the day of judgment, the pains of hell, and the sweetness of the heavenly kingdom."

For the purpose of giving some idea of this poetry, the following translation of a part of the poem on which Cædmon's reputation was principally founded, is quoted from Mr. Wright.* It is the commencement of the speech of Satan, when he first recovers from the consternation into which the entire defeat of his ambition had thrown him, and forms his treacherous designs against the happiness of our first parents :—

"Boiled within him
his thought about his heart,
hot was without him
his dire punishment.
Then spake he words :
' This narrow place is most unlike
that other that we formerly knew,
high in heaven's kingdom,
which my Master bestowed on me,
though we it, for the All-powerful,
may not possess.
We must cede our realm,
yet hath He not done rightly,
that He hath struck us down
to the fiery abyss
of the hot hell,
bereft us of heaven's kingdom,
hath decreed
to people it
with mankind.
That is to me of sorrows the
greatest,
that Adam,

who was wrought of earth,
shall possess
my strong seat ;
that it shall be to him in delight,
and we endure this torment,
misery in hell.
O, had I power of my hands,
might one season
be without,
be one winter's space !
Then with this host I—
But around me lie
iron bonds,
presseth this cord of chain ;
I am powerless !
me have so hard
the clasps of hell,
so firmly, grasped !
Here is a vast fire
above and underneath.
Never did I see
a loathlier landscape.
The flame abateth not

* *Biographia Britannica Literaria*, p. 199.

hot over hell.	of hard iron,
Me hath the clasping of these rings,	forged with heat,
this hard polished band,	with which me God
impeded in my course,	hath fastened by the neck.
debarred me from my way.	Thus perceive I that He knoweth
My feet are bound,	my mind,
my hands manacled ;	and that He knew, also,
of these hell-doors are	the Lord of Hosts,
the ways obstructed ;	that should us through Adam
so that with aught I cannot	evil befall,
from these limb-bonds escape.	about the realm of heaven
About me lie	where I had power of my hands.' "
huge gratings	

This extract not only shows, as far as can be shown in a translation, the style and manner of Cædmon's poetry ; it also bears such a remarkable analogy to the similar speech of the fallen angel in the first book of "Paradise Lost," that the mind instantly refers to that production of Milton, and is almost instinctively led to suppose that he had seen and richly amplified those early Saxon lines. One remarkable feature connected with this poetry is, that we have no authority for believing that it was committed to writing until a long while after it was composed. Cædmon died about A.D. 680 ; yet no manuscripts are found which are of an earlier date than the tenth century, with the exception of some insignificant fragments ; nor does there occur any mention of such manuscripts before the time of king Alfred, in the latter half of the ninth century.

During the long period which had thus elapsed before this poetry was committed to writing as we now find it, it was preserved almost entirely by the memory. Thus the Saxons treasured up in their minds, and handed down to posterity, the songs of their minstrel bards ; in the same manner as the works of Homer were transmitted, in the early times of Greece.

Although, when the memory was cultivated as it appears to have been by the people in those early ages, it might receive, retain, and transmit language with an accuracy and to an extent that may appear perfectly marvellous in these days of universal writing ; yet some alterations must have

been the inevitable consequence of such a mode of transmission. This is the more evident, inasmuch as the verses were generally recited by persons who were themselves professed minstrels, and who, consequently, when a word or a phrase was lost, or even when it did not suit their taste, might take upon themselves to supply or correct it. Whatever regret may arise from the application of this obvious remark, on account of our not being able confidently to rely on our having the exact sense of those ancient poets; it must not be supposed that their general authenticity is affected by it. This is thought by competent judges to be sufficiently established. Nor are we to suppose that the character of those pieces of poetry, when they came from their authors' hands, was at all inferior to that which is sustained by the fragments which have been preserved to our day. There is reason to fear, that in various ways they have sustained serious injury. At all events, we have the authority of Aldhelm for saying, that Cædmon wrote poetry with great sweetness and effect, and that none who afterward attempted it could compare with him. This must be regarded as a high compliment, when we remember that Aldhelm, himself eminent as a scholar, was an English poet; and our estimate of the proficiency made in versification at this early period will be heightened by knowing, that Bede himself was also very partial to the vernacular Anglo-Saxon poetry.

While the introduction of the Christian religion was modifying and improving the old national literature by bringing vividly to the minds of the early English race the heart-stirring facts, and the profound and glorious doctrines, of divine revelation, and was lighting up a dawning hope of brighter and better days for our country by expanding the heart and informing the intellect; the same event was also the means of contributing to both these results by making the Anglo-Saxons acquainted with a world of learning of which they appear to have been almost wholly, if not altogether, ignorant.

Some of the missionaries who have been regarded as the

fathers of the Anglo-Saxon church, were distinguished as scholars, and by their teaching and example gave an impulse to the dissemination of a general love for letters among their converts. It is, however, to two foreigners, Theodore and Adrian, that we are mainly to attribute the establishment of learning among the Anglo-Saxons.

These distinguished persons, as we have already stated, arrived in England, A.D. 669. The archbishop, even in Rome, was famous for his acquaintance with profane as well as sacred literature, and that equally in the Latin and Greek languages. His friend, the abbot Adrian, who was by birth an African, was, like his companion, says Bede, "exceedingly skilled, both in Greek and Latin;" and he is termed by William of Malmsbury "a fountain of letters, and a river of arts."* These learned ecclesiastics first began to teach the arts and sciences, and the languages of Greece and Rome, in conjunction with the doctrines and institutes of Christianity.

This opened to the view of the Anglo-Saxons a new intellectual field, which they approached with avidity and cultivated with diligence. "In the time of Theodore and Adrian, the principal seats of learning were in Kent and the south of England; where it continued long after to flourish at Malmsbury and some other places. But the kingdom of Northumbria seems to have afforded a still more congenial situation; and the school established at York by Wilfrid and archbishop Egbert was soon famous throughout Christendom. Egbert taught there Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; and the vast collection of books which had been amassed by him and his predecessors, afforded great facility to literary pursuits."†

About the close of the seventh century, learning had so much advanced in England, that some of our countrymen had acquired considerable literary fame in the world. One of the most distinguished of these was Aldhelm, a near relation of Ina, king of the West Saxons. Having received the first part of his education at Malmsbury, he travelled into France and Italy for improvement. On his return, he studied some

* WRIGHT'S *Biographia Britannica Literaria*, p. 31.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 32-36.

time under Adrian, at Canterbury. Here he acquired a rich amount of knowledge, and became famous for his learning, not only in England, but also in foreign countries. He is said to have been the first Englishman who wrote in the Latin language both in prose and verse. Of him the Venerable Bede says, "He was a man of universal erudition, having an elegant style, and being wonderfully well acquainted with books, both on philosophical and religious subjects." And king Alfred the Great declared, that "Aldhelm was the best of all the Saxon poets, and that a song which was universally sung in his time, near two hundred years after the author's death, was of his composition."*

Yet as all language of a general kind, used in this manner, may be considered as spoken in a comparative sense, and therefore may not convey a correct idea of the real state of Anglo-Saxon learning, we think it important to give at length a letter written by this person to Hedda, bishop of Winchester, respecting the sciences which he and others studied in the school at Canterbury:—

"I confess, most reverend father, that I had resolved, if circumstances would permit, to spend the approaching Christmas in the company of my relations, and to enjoy for some time the felicity of your conversation. But since I now find it will be impossible for me to accomplish that design, for various reasons, which the bearer of this letter will communicate; I hope you will have the goodness to excuse my not waiting upon you as I intended. The truth is, that there is a necessity for spending a great deal of time in this seat of learning, especially for one who is inflamed with the love of reading, and is earnestly desirous, as I am, of being intimately acquainted with all the secrets of the Roman jurisprudence. Besides, there is another study in which I am engaged, which is still more tedious and perplexing,—to make myself master of all the rules of a hundred different kinds of verses, and of the musical modulations of words and syllables. This study is rendered more difficult, and almost inextricable, by the great scarcity of able teachers.

* DR. HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. ii., p. 319.

But it would far exceed the bounds of a familiar letter to explain this matter fully, and lay open all the secrets of the art of metre, concerning letters, syllables, poetic feet and figures, verses, tones, time, &c. Add to this the doctrine of the seven divisions of poetry, with all their variations, and what number of feet every different kind of verse must consist of. The perfect knowledge of all this, and several other things of a like kind, cannot, I imagine, be acquired in a short space of time.

“But what shall I say of arithmetic, whose long and intricate calculations are sufficient to overwhelm the mind, and throw it into despair? For my own part, all the labour of my former studies, by which I had made myself a complete master of several sciences, was trifling, in comparison of what this cost me; so that I may say with St. Jerome, upon a similar occasion, ‘Before I entered upon that study I thought myself a master; but then I found I was but a learner.’

“However, by the blessing of God, and assiduous reading, I have at length overcome the greatest difficulties, and found out the method of calculating suppositions, which are called the parts of a number. I believe it will be better to say nothing at all of astronomy, the zodiac, and its twelve signs revolving in the heavens, which require a long illustration, than to disgrace that noble art by too short and imperfect an account; especially as there are some parts of it, as astrology and the perplexing calculation of horoscopes, which require the hand of a master to do them justice.”*

This statement, clothed with all the freshness and interest which personal experience gives, must be regarded as very important; and it certainly exhibits a range of learning which may be accounted extensive, considering how recently the study of letters had been introduced into this country.

“The Anglo-Saxons approached the field which was thus laid open to them with extraordinary avidity. They were like the adventurous traveller who has just landed on a

* DR. HENRY’S “History of Great Britain,” vol. ii., pp. 320, 321.

newly-discovered shore : the very obstacles which at first stood in their way, seemed to have been placed there only to stimulate their zeal. They thus soon gained a march in advance even of their teachers ; and the same age in which learning had been introduced amongst them, saw it reflected back with double lustre on those who had sent it. At the beginning of the eighth century, England possessed a number of scholars, who would have been the just pride of the most enlightened age ; and not only teachers, but books also, were sent over to the Franks and Germans. The science which they planted there, continued to flourish long after it had faded at home.” *

It would greatly illustrate this subject to add biographical sketches of the most eminent scholars who flourished in Britain during this century ; but our limits prevent us from going beyond a brief notice of two or three of the principal of them.

Tobias, bishop of Rochester, having studied several years in the monastery of Glastonbury, finished his education at Canterbury under Theodore and his companion Adrian. In this famous school, we are told, he made great proficiency in all parts of learning, both civil and ecclesiastical ; and the Greek and Latin languages were as familiar to him as his mother tongue.

The Venerable Bede, to whom we are indebted for an important History of the English Church, was another most illustrious example of extensive learning. The fame of his vast natural and acquired abilities had extended even unto Rome ; and the opinion entertained respecting his learning and judgment, and the value attached to his advice, will be seen by the following extract from a letter which was sent by Pope Sergius to Ceolfrid, abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow.

“ Some questions,” says the pontiff, “ have arisen concerning ecclesiastical affairs, which require the most serious examination of men of the greatest learning. I therefore beseech and require you, by the love of God, by your regard

* WRIGHT'S *Biographia Britannica Literaria*, p. 32.

to religion, and by the obedience which you owe to the universal church, that you do not refuse to comply with our present requisition, but without delay send to the apostles Peter and Paul, and to me, Bede, the pious servant of God, a presbyter in your monastery. You may depend upon it, that he shall be sent back to you, as soon as the solemnities of these consultations are happily ended." *

It does not appear that Bede ever complied with the pope's wish : yet the circumstance shows the estimation in which he was held even in Italy.

In addition to these, we may mention Alcuin. He was of a noble family, and born at York, A.D. 735. Having been devoted to the church at an early age, and made great proficiency in his studies, he was, when about twenty years old, chosen to attend his preceptor Aelbert to the continent, in search of scarce and valuable books, and of new discoveries in science. On this occasion he resided some time at Rome. Soon after their return, Aelbert was raised to the archiepiscopal see, when he ordained Alcuin a deacon, and gave him the charge of the school at York, over which he had himself previously presided.

"Under Alcuin's superintendence, the school increased in reputation, and many foreigners came to partake of the advantages derived from his teaching." On a subsequent journey to the continent, Alcuin visited Parma ; where he met with Charlemagne, who prevailed on him to go and reside at his court. There he taught rhetoric, logic, mathematics, and divinity, and became a great favourite of the emperor. But this was not all : Alcuin, by his eminent abilities and vigorous exertions, exercised a mighty influence on the learning of France. "That country," says one of our best writers on literary history, "is indebted to Alcuin for all the polite learning it boasted of in that and the following ages. The universities of Paris, Tours, Fulden, Soissons, and many others, owe to him their origin and increase ; those of whom he was not the superior and founder being at least enlightened by his doctrine and

* DR. HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. ii., p. 330.

example, and enriched by the benefits he procured for them from Charlemagne." *

Prior to this revival of learning, the liberal arts had almost ceased in France; and Italy was, in this respect, scarcely in a better condition. In Rome, which had been the seat of learning as well as of empire, the light of science was flickering in the socket. The state of literature in Spain may be judged of by the fact, that at this time canons were made against ordaining men priests or bishops who could neither read nor sing psalms.

Thus, when the Muses were expelled from the continent, they found refuge in this country. Here learning flourished, and other nations gladly availed themselves of the opportunity of procuring books and scholars from Britain. Hence, referring to these times, Alfred the Great says, in one of his letters, "I often revolve in my mind the many learned and wise men who formerly flourished in the English nation, both among the clergy and laity. How happy were those times! Then the princes governed their subjects with great wisdom, according to the word of God, and became famous for their wise and upright administration. Then the clergy were equally diligent in reading, studying, and teaching; and this country was so famous for learning, that many came hither from foreign parts to be instructed. Then the churches and monasteries were filled with libraries of excellent books in several languages." †

We pass on to notice the most prominent religious doctrines which were taught by the Anglo-Saxon church. In a short sketch of these, we shall have to direct attention principally to those points on which great and fatal errors have obtained, and in regard to which the English church appears to have suffered corruption.

The Anglo-Saxon church seems to have known no standard of faith but the holy Scriptures; and these inspired writings

* CAVE, as quoted by DR. HENRY, in his "History of Great Britain," vol. ii., p. 335.

† DR. HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. ii., p. 327. Much important information on this subject may be obtained from WRIGHT'S *Biographia Britannica Literaria*.

were earnestly recommended to the serious perusal of the people generally. The efforts which were made to render the word of God into the vernacular language of the country, must in themselves be considered as very important. Of course, all the copies of Scripture, brought to this island from time to time, were either in the original languages, or in a Latin version. The first attempt of which we have any information, to give the Saxons written scriptural knowledge in their own language, was the poetic labours of Cædmon, to which we have before referred. His work has been called, "A Paraphrase on the Bible." Although it certainly brought out most distinctly several of the important facts of scripture history, and displayed some knowledge of its doctrines, yet it appears to be as undeserving the title of "a paraphrase" as is any modern poem on sacred subjects.

The work of Cædmon was soon after followed by the translation of the Scripture lessons read in the daily services of the church. About the same time, (the beginning of the eighth century,) it is said that two translations of the Psalms were completed; one by Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne; and the other by Guthlac, the first Saxon anchorite. In this century, also, Bede translated the Gospel of St. John into the Saxon tongue. It has been supposed, that this eminent man had previously rendered the whole of the Scriptures into Saxon.* It is, however, certain that a manuscript of the four Gospels of Jerome's Latin version was copied by

* In 1571 a Saxon copy of the four Gospels was printed by John Fox, the martyrologist, from a manuscript in the Bodleian Library, with the assistance and encouragement of archbishop Parker, and as demonstrative proof that this part of holy Scripture had been translated into the then vernacular language of the English nation. In the dedication of that book, addressed to queen Elizabeth, Mr. Fox says, "that our countryman Bede did translate the whole Bible into the Saxon tounge; that he translated again the Gospel of St. John into the English tounge a little before his departure; that king Alfred translated both the Olde and the Newe Testament into his own native language; and that, if histories be well examined, we shall find, both before the Conquest and after, as well before John Wickliffe was borne as since, the whole body of Scriptures by sundry men translated into this our country tounge."—See LEWIS'S "History of the Translations of the Bible," p. 6. 8vo. London, 1739.

Eadfrid, afterwards bishop of Lindisfarne, in the year 680. This manuscript was greatly adorned by Ethelwood, his successor in the see, with golden bosses and precious stones, as well as with very curious illuminations. To it an interlined Anglo-Saxon version was at some subsequent period added by a priest, named Aldred. This is supposed to have been done about the time of Alfred the Great.

“There is another Anglo-Saxon version of the four Gospels, probably of the same antiquity as the one just mentioned. This version, like the former, is interlined, the Anglo-Saxon word being placed over the corresponding Latin. The version, or gloss, as it is termed, appears to have been the work of two individuals, FARMEN and OWEN; the former having made a translation of St. Matthew’s Gospel, the latter the rest of the work. This is indicated by the subscriptions at the end of the respective portions. To St. Matthew’s Gospel there is subjoined: *Farmen presbyter thas boc thus gleosode*. ‘Farmen the presbyter this book thus glossed;’ that is, interpreted. At the end of the book there is subjoined, *The min bruche gebidde fore Owun the thas boc gloesede, Færmæn, thæm preoste æt Harawada*. ‘He that of mine profiteth, bede’ (pray) ‘he for Owen that this book glossed,’ (and) ‘Farmen the priest at Harewood.’ After this the transcriber of the manuscript has added his own subscription in Saxon characters: *Macregol depinxit hoc Euangelium. Quicumque legerit et intellexerit istam narrationem, oret pro Macreguil scriptore*. ‘Macregol depicted this Gospel. Whoever shall read and understand this relation, let him pray for Macreguil the writer.’ From this inscription of Macregol or Macreguil, we may learn two things: First, that at that time vernacular versions were not at all prohibited; and, Secondly, that the transcriber deemed that in multiplying copies he was doing a deed which might claim on his behalf the prayers of those ‘who may read or understand the book.’ This valuable and interesting manuscript is in the Bodleian Library.”*

* “Historical Account of the English Versions of the Scriptures,” prefixed to “Bagster’s English Hexapla.” 4to. London, 1841.

We need not add any account of the well-known labours of king Alfred in the same field of usefulness. What has been said will be sufficient to show that the early Anglo-Saxon church made great and persevering efforts to translate the Scriptures into the vernacular language for the benefit of the people.

We proceed to adduce evidence that the general study of the Scriptures was considered a religious duty, and as such urged upon the people. "That these exertions flowed from a full conviction of the propriety, nay, even of the necessity, of giving general currency to God's holy word, admits not of a doubt. Alcuin, the pupil probably of Bede, certainly of Egbert, pre-eminent among the ancient metropolitans of our northern province, was a distinguished commentator upon Scripture. And thus he recommends the study of that inestimable book: 'Would we ever be with God? Let us pray and read. In the former of these exercises, we converse with our heavenly Father; in the latter, He converses with us. Would we sufficiently feed our souls? The Bible must supply us with the means. It is no less needful for such an end, than earthly viands are for corporeal nutriment. Would we travel securely through the world? Holy writ must shed its light along our course.'

"Such is the language of one whom England valued far above most of her then-existing children; of one, too, who, having attained the summit of domestic celebrity, was invited over to the court of Charlemain. To that illustrious monarch Alcuin became hereafter the principal adviser in all affairs connected with learning and religion. Nor did he fail of establishing upon the Continent a reputation fully equal to that which he had gained in his native isle. Did, then, this highly-distinguished Englishman consider Scripture as an insufficient guide to heavenly knowledge? Had he looked upon the revelation of God's holy word as only partially committed to the sacred record, would he not have naturally somewhat qualified his glowing commendation of biblical inquiries? If articles of faith are extant without the volume of inspiration, surely those who seek for spiritual

information only from its pages, may thus feed their souls with insufficient nutriment, and grievously mistake the real direction of their course !

“ Alcuin appears, however, to have been wholly free from any such apprehensions. In ignorance of Scripture, he sees famine and blindness weighing down the soul ; in a close acquaintance with the holy book he discerns a due supply of that celestial nutriment, which ripens men for a mansion in their Almighty Father’s tranquil, spotless, glorious, everlasting home.” *

This in itself might be sufficient for our purpose ; but it is not difficult to add similar testimonies. Raban Maur was one of the most illustrious of Alcuin’s pupils. Even if our island cannot claim the honour of his birth, his master, and his unsparing use of Bede, obviously connect him with the theology of ancient England. What, then, was his opinion respecting the sufficiency of holy writ ? He pronounces that all the principles of morality and faith are plainly contained in the sacred record, and that for understanding obscure passages of Scripture a careful and scholarlike collation of them with other texts, alike in import, but clearer in expression, should be resorted to. His language is :—

“ For those doctrines which contain the principles of faith, hope, and charity, are all to be found among the plain declarations of holy writ. But when a degree of familiarity with the phraseology of the divine writings is acquired, we must proceed to the elucidation and discussion of those passages in which some obscurity seems to prevail ; that examples may be adduced from such forms of speech as are plainer and more obvious, to illustrate those which seem to be more obscure ; and that testimonies derived from fixed and clearly-defined sentiments may remove all doubt concerning those which appear to us as uncertain. In this exercise of our mental faculties, the memory renders us the greatest and most effectual service ; for if in this matter it be defective, it cannot be amended by any of these precepts.” †

* SOAMES’ “Eight Sermons at the Bampton Lecture,” p. 73. 8vo. Oxford, 1830.

† *In his enim quæ apertè in Scripturis posita sunt, inveniuntur illa*

In perfect unison with these sentiments is the language of Ælfric, who on this subject says, "All teachers that take not their doctrine and examples out of these holy books, are like those of whom Christ Himself thus said : ' If the blind man be leader of the blind, then shall they both fall into some blind pit.' But such teachers as take their examples and doctrine from hence, whether it be out of the Old Testament or the New, are such as Christ Himself spake of in these words : ' Every learned scribe in the church of God is like the master of a family, who brings forth ever out of his own treasure things new and old.' " And again, the same writer asks, " How can *he* fare well, *who* turns his heart away from holy Scripture ? " *

Such opinions as these were not merely entertained by individuals ; they were embodied in the formularies of the church. Hence the prelates, on election and consecration, were publicly interrogated thus : " Will you apply the whole powers of your mind to the study of holy Scripture ? " And again : " Will you instruct the people committed to your charge in the things which you shall have drawn from the sacred volume ? " The following extract from one of the Saxon homilies proves that this duty was considered generally binding : " A ransomed soul, summoned to its final occupation of the body from which death had severed it, introduces the following words into its gratulatory salutation : ' When we were together in the world, thou paidest earnest heed to holy writ.' " †

omnia quæ continent fidem, mores vivendi, spem scilicet atque charitatem. Cum verò factâ quâdam familiaritate cum ipsâ linguâ divinarum Scripturarum, in ea quæ obscura sunt aperienda et discutienda, pergendum est ; ut ad obscuriores locutiones illustrandas, de manifestioribus sumantur exempla ; et quædam certarum sententiarum testimonia dubitationem incertis auferant : in quâ re memoria valet plurimum, quæ, si defuerit, non potest his præceptis dari.—RABAN MAUR, as quoted in SOAMES' " Eight Sermons at the Bampton Lecture," p. 94. The paragraph in the text is a free translation of this extract.

* Ælfric was archbishop of Canterbury, and died, A.D. 1006. The preceding extract is from L'ISLE's Translation, as quoted by SOAMES, in his " Bampton Lecture," p. 95.

† SOAMES' " Bampton Lecture," p. 77.

It further appears, that, notwithstanding the extravagant notions which were entertained on the subject of sacramental efficacy, transubstantiation, in the Romish sense of the word, was not a doctrine of the early Anglo-Saxon church.

Before any testimony on this subject is adduced, we may be permitted to remark, that, if clear, unambiguous, indisputable evidence is required on any subject, it may surely be demanded in support of such a tenet as this. We are obviously warranted in doubting that any such doctrine is taught in Scripture, unless its teaching be plain, consistent, and incapable of bearing any other sense. For the same reason we expect ample proof, before we can believe that such opinions prevailed among our countrymen in ancient times. The state of the case demands this. That bread and wine are really and truly changed into the flesh and blood, the human body, of Jesus Christ, instantly upon the pronouncement of certain words by a priest, who is but a man ; and that this body, in consequence of this conversion, becomes so peculiarly joined to the soul and Divinity of the Saviour, that He is not only present as to His body, but equally so in regard to His Deity ; and that, therefore, the consecrated elements are proper subjects for adoration and worship ;—these dogmas seem so extravagant, so unsupported by Scripture, so contrary to reason, and to involve such an outrage on all the senses, that we should scarcely conceive it possible that any reasonable creature could believe them, did not melancholy facts attest that they have been fully and extensively received.

Was this the belief of the Anglo-Saxon church? We think not. At the same time, we are bound to admit that those unsound and extravagant views which, on the Continent, led to the recognition of the doctrine of transubstantiation as an article of faith, were making rapid advances in the Anglo-Saxon church in the latter part of its existence, and ultimately produced such a state of feeling as enabled Lanfranc to establish that dogma in England immediately after the Norman Conquest.

The progress of these opinions has been thus related by Waterland: "In the year 787, the second council of Nice began with a rash determination, that the sacred symbols are not figures or images at all, but the very body and blood. About 831, Paschasius Radbertus carried it further, even to transubstantiation, or something very like it. The name of 'transubstantiation' is supposed to have come in about A.D. 1100, first mentioned by Hildebertus Cenomanensis, of that time.* In A.D. 1215, the doctrine was made an article of faith by the Lateran council, under Innocent the Third."†

Ælfric, in his "Paschal Homily," speaks very explicitly on this subject, and is supposed to express the sentiments generally entertained by the Saxon church in his time. He says, "The bread and wine, which by the priest's ministry is hallowed, show one thing without to men's senses; and another thing they call within to believing minds. Without, they be seen bread and wine, both in figure and in taste: and they be truly, after their hallowing, Christ's body and His blood by spiritual mystery. The body truly that Christ suffered in was born of the flesh of Mary, with blood and with bone, with skin and with sinews, in human limbs, with a reasonable soul living; and a spiritual body, which we call 'housel,' is gathered of many corns, without blood and bone, without limb, without soul; and therefore nothing is to be understood therein bodily, but spiritually. This mystery is a pledge and a figure: Christ's body is truth itself." This writer makes reference to the same subject in his correspondence with contemporary bishops. In an epistle directed to Wulfine, bishop of Sherburne, he says, that "'housel' is Christ's body, not bodily, but spiritually; not the body He suffered in, but the body of which He spake, when He blessed bread and wine to housel." And again to Wulfstane, archbishop of York, he writes, "And yet, notwithstanding, that lively bread is not bodily so, nor the self-same body that Christ suffered in; nor that holy wine is the Saviour's blood

* "Edit. Benedict., p. 669."

† Works, vol. vii., p. 182, *note*, as quoted in DR. SHORT'S "History of the Church of England," p. 18. 8vo. London, 1840.

which was shed for us in bodily thing, but in spiritual understanding.”*

In addition to this, Bede affirms that Jesus gave to His disciples at the last supper “the figure of His holy body and blood.” And again, he draws a parallel between the Lord’s supper and the passover. “In the former celebration, we are told, Jesus ‘substituted for the flesh and blood of a lamb the sacrament of His own body and blood.’ In the days of our venerable countryman, we are assured expressly, the term ‘sacrament’ meant a ‘sacred sign.’ The Son of Man, then, in instituting the holy supper, did not remove a shadow, to make way for a substance. He merely substituted one sacred sign for another.”†

Alcuin, Raban Maur, and Johannes Scotus use similar expressions; and from these, Usher, Soames, and others argue, that as they cannot be reconciled to the opinions now held by the church of Rome, so the Anglo-Saxon church could not have entertained those opinions. On the other hand, Dr. Lingard maintains, that these authorities use expressions which a member of the church of England would not use. Admitting both views to be correct, the intimation we have already given is justified; and the Anglo-Saxon church is found to have gone beyond the limits of any sound scriptural views on this subject, but not to have proceeded so far as to have adopted the absurd dogma of transubstantiation.

On the subject of purgatory, we shall have to come to nearly the same result. The brief history of this doctrine may be given as follows: “About the middle of the third century, Origen, among other Platonic conceits, vented this: That the faithful, the apostles themselves not excepted, would, at the day of judgment, pass through a purgatorial fire, to endure a longer or shorter time, according to their imperfections. In this conceit, directly contrary to many express texts of Scripture, he was followed by some great

* USHER’S “Answer to a Jesuit,” Works, vol. iii., pp. 87, 88. 8vo. Dublin, 1842.

† SOAMES’ “Bampton Lecture,” p. 373.

men in the church: and St. Augustine began to doubt whether this imagined purgation were not to be made in the interval between death and the resurrection, at least as to the souls of the more imperfect Christians. Towards the end of the fifth century, pope Gregory undertook to assert this problem. Four hundred years after, pope John the Eighteenth, or, as some say, the Nineteenth, instituted a holy-day, wherein he required all men to pray for the souls in purgatory. At length the cabal at Florence, A.D. 1439, turned the dream into an article of faith."*

In proceeding to show the opinions which were held by the early English Christians on this subject, it may be necessary to observe that there can be no doubt, that some notions of an analogous character had been entertained in the Anglo-Saxon church from its commencement. For, Gregory, who was the author of the English mission, "maintained expressly that there is a purgatory, for expiating the slight faults of those who have deserved this grace by the good actions which they did in this life. He observes that many things have been discovered a little while ago which were unknown in antiquity, concerning the state of souls after death. The reason which he gives for it is this, that, the end of this world drawing near, the transactions of the other begin to be discovered."† In proof that this was not a mere private opinion, but had largely affected the western church, it may be added, that Julian of Toledo, who died, A.D. 690, maintains the existence of a "purgatory, which he believes to be a real fire, wherewith sins remaining at one's death are expiated in the other world, and that the time of the souls' abiding there is proportioned to the number or the grievousness of the sins committed by them."‡

At the synod of British bishops, held at Cloveshoo, A.D. 747, in their twenty-seventh canon, among various regulations for worship, supplications for the dead are recognised;

* DR. SHORT'S "History of the Church of England," p. 67; and "The Phenix," vol. i., pp. 82, 83. 8vo. London, 1707.

† DU PIN'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. v., p. 100.

‡ *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 44.

and the following is given as an example :—"O Lord, we beseech Thee, grant that the soul of such a person may be secured in a state of indisturbance and repose ; and that he may be admitted, with the rest of Thy saints, into the regions of light and happiness !"* Conformable to these sentiments is the language of Bede, who, in commenting upon the words of the Psalmist, "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy wrath," observes that "venial sins must be burnt away in purgatorial fire, now in the space intervening before the day of judgment."†

Yet it must be admitted that the Saxon homilies generally exhibit a very different doctrine. "One of these venerable sermons teaches, that he can never be clean who will not cease from sin ere his dying day. Another of them asserts that no opportunities for compensating for iniquities await men beyond the grave ; but that 'every one will fare hereafter according to his deserts here, be they good, or be they evil.' A third warns the people against any expectations of pardon for sin in a future state. Repentance in this world, it teaches, must be accomplished by all who would find forgiveness on reaching the world of spirits."‡ On this evidence it has been triumphantly asked, "Were those to whom we owe such declarations firmly persuaded that a purgatorial fire would cleanse the disembodied soul from every defilement of carnality?" We may readily admit, no such "firm persuasion" was general in the early Anglo-Saxon church ; yet it is sufficiently evident that some notions of purification through suffering, after the termination of human life, had obtained, and that these continued to increase in strength and influence, until the modern Popish doctrine had become fully established. Hence it is allowed, that Alcuin had followed those theorists of earlier date, "by whom the final conflagration was expected to prove purgatorial in its nature and effects. A homilist, accordingly,

* COLLIER'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i.

† Quoted by SOAMES, in his "Eight Sermons at the Bampton Lecture," p. 319.

‡ SOAMES' "Bampton Lecture," p. 324.

affirms unhesitatingly, that all men would have to make their anxious way through the flames enveloping a guilty world, and that, from this awful passage, every one who came out unsinged, would be completely cleansed from the pollution of iniquity."*

It will be in the recollection of our readers that these notions strikingly accord with the traditional mythology, which was held by the Saxons in their Heathen state. The precise opinions which are supposed for a considerable period to have prevailed in the Anglo-Saxon church are, that the best men pass directly from human life to heaven, the worst men to hell; that men who have spent a considerable space of time not unworthily of their Christian calling, pass directly from human life to paradise; while those who have deferred repentance until they come to die, but then have effected it, pass into purgatory. This last principle is thus asserted and explained in the speech of the angel, which is given in the Saxon homily on the Vision of Drighthelm: "The great burning vale, which thou sawest before, is a punishing place, in which the souls are punished and cleansed of those men who would not correct their sins through confession and penitence in life. But yet they had repentance at their last day, and so passed repentant from the world; and they will all come, on doom's-day, to the kingdom of heaven. Also, some of them, through the aid of friendly people, and through alms-deeds which men do for them, and, most of all, through the holy mass, are released from the punishments ere the great judgment."†

Our attention shall now be directed to the progression of opinion in the Anglo-Saxon church respecting the invocation of saints and martyrs, and the worship of images. Some information has been given in a preceding chapter respecting the origin and influence of this error, prior to the mission of Augustine; and it seems natural to expect that a certain measure of this departure from Scripture truth would have been introduced into this island by the missionaries

* SOAMES' "Bampton Lecture," p. 326.

† *Ibid.*, p. 358.

from Rome. Yet the earliest references to the subject which the English church affords, exhibit this evil in an aspect the least objectionable and injurious. A notion prevailed among them, which, as it does not seem to be contradicted by Scripture, may be true; namely, that the spirits of those persons who in their life-time had been eminent for piety and usefulness, were after death deeply solicitous for the welfare of that church and those members with whom, in the days of their flesh, they had been associated. Under the influence of this feeling, not only was a general reference made in the prayers of the church to the deep interest which "the spirits of the just men made perfect" felt in the well-being of their still militant associates, but "particular names were inserted in the commemorative offices of piety, imploring Him to whom men alone can look for help and safety, that these honoured members of Christ's invisible kingdom might aid the suits of struggling mortals by their own more powerful suffrages. Thus, not only was it entreated of God and Christ that all the choir of angels, patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, might pray for the suppliants; but also, that St. Peter, St. Paul, and other saints, might likewise render them this assistance." *

This is very clearly stated in various homilies and liturgical services: "It is written in the old law, that no man shall pray to anything, but to God alone, because no creature is worthy of that honour, but He alone who is the Maker of all things. To Him only we ought to pray. He only is very Lord and very God. We desire intercession of holy men, that they will intercede for us to their Lord and our Lord. Nevertheless, we do not pray to them as we do to God, nor will they suffer it; as the angel said to John the apostle, when he would have fallen at his feet: 'Do it not; bow not thyself to me. I am God's servant, as thou art; pray to God only.'" †

The manner of this specific reference may be thus given from another Saxon homily: "Pray we now, men, the indivisible Trinity that we with the prayers of the most

* SOAMES' "Bampton Lecture," p. 194.

† *Ibid.*, p. 216.

holy man St. Chad may be assisted ; that we may so act as to come to the companionship of the holy bishop and happy spirit ; our Lord Jesus Christ forgiving (us, or granting us this), who liveth and reigneth with the Father, and with the Holy Ghost, world without end." *

Thus far had the Anglo-Saxon church proceeded toward the direct invocation of saints ; and while this was the case, as might have been expected, they followed their continental neighbours in ascribing the first place of honour and excellence among creatures to the Virgin Mary. Of this, abundant evidence might be given. "O thou blessed mother of God," rapturously exclaims the Saxon homilist, "Māry ever Virgin, temple of the Holy Ghost, Virgin before conception, Virgin in conception, Virgin after conception ; great is thy glory among the ransomed of the Lord !" †

The impassioned state of feeling to which the early English church had been carried by the influence of this delusion, was not likely to restrain itself within any limits that sober reason or scriptural truth might assign to it. Hence, although it is confidently asserted that direct invocation of saints is not recognised by any of the remaining formularies of that church, there is abundant proof that "individuals acquired an unauthorized habit of invoking directly our Lord's mother after the flesh, urging her to press their several suits on high. Nor did masters in theology repress this innovation. On the contrary, exhortations, appended occasionally to homilies for festivals, encouraged and incited the superstitious populace thus to forsake" the way of truth.‡ The following quotation from an address existing in the Saxon language, may be given as one instance of this : "My beloved brethren, come, call with continual prayers to the holy mother of God, that she would intercede for us in our necessities to her Child. It is very credible that He will yield to her great intercession, who demeaned Himself, that He, through her, for the world's redemption, was born among human beings." §

* SOAMES' "Bampton Lecture," p. 21.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

† *Ibid.*, p. 200.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

The progress of this error stood intimately connected with the adoration of relics and images. A high degree of veneration for the remains of holy men had existed in the church long anterior to the evangelization of the Saxon kingdoms, and was introduced with the Gospel into Britain. We find "relics" among the presents which Gregory sent to Augustine, on hearing of the success of his mission. The history of Bede is also full of instances of this veneration, and of miracles which were wrought by virtue of these precious remains of departed saints. In the early ages of Christianity, no pictures or images were allowed in the churches. But some approaches to this practice in the case of pictures must have been made in the beginning of the fourth century; for in one of the canons of the council of Elvira, held A.D. 305, their introduction into churches was strictly prohibited, "lest that which is worshipped and adored be painted upon the walls." *

Notwithstanding this check, and the continued opposition of many eminent men, pictures and images were admitted into churches before the close of the fourth century; and, in the following one, they began to receive veneration, which gradually conducted the erring votaries to the practice of actual adoration. To remedy this evil, a council was held at Constantinople, A.D. 754, which was attended by about three hundred and thirty-eight bishops. "This synod, after a close examination of the Scriptures, the Fathers, and the six preceding councils, upon the point in question, condemned all idolatry, the use of images and pictures representing Christ, &c.; and interdicted, under pain of an anathema, any adoration or reverence of such images, as an insult to God, to Christ, and to the saints." †

This was, however, followed, A.D. 787, by the second council of Nice, which was called by the influence of the empress Irene, a zealous advocate for image-worship. At this council, the decision of that of Constantinople was reversed; and it was decreed that "images might not only

* BINGHAM'S "Christian Antiquities," vol. ii., p. 201.

† SPANHEIM'S "Annals," p. 418.

be had for historical use, but also for worship (*ad cultum*) in the temples; that they were to be kissed, venerated, worshipped, (*colendas*,) adored, (*adorandas*,) and honoured with wax lights, incense, and other rites, the religious worship due to God alone excepted." *

This abomination did not proceed without opposition. Charlemagne, whose influence was then paramount in the West, called a synod to condemn the practice, and wrote four books on the subject. Many bishops in Italy and Germany pursued a similar course; and it is said that a synod was also held in Britain which condemned image-worship, and that Albinus wrote against it.† But, however this may be, it is certain that, within a century after the second Nicene council, the Anglo-Saxon church had ceased to look upon the worship of substantial forms as an usage "altogether execrated by the church of God." "They paid religious honours to the cross; they paid them to graven images; they paid them to real or imaginary remains of sainted mortals." ‡

Thus idolatry, in its awful amount of error and evil, was associated with what still professed to be the church of Christ. The Scriptures, it is true, were not yet prohibited; but how could their clear and positive laws be made to accord with this departure from the truth? Only by vitiating the word of God; and this was resorted to. The copies of portions of Scripture were few, and these were chiefly in the hands of the clergy. The Decalogue, which was better known, was altered to suit the progress of this corruption; the second commandment was omitted, and the tenth divided into two, to make up the number.

The following is a translation of the Decalogue from a Saxon manuscript: "Then wrote the Almighty God for him two stone tablets with His own finger; on which were written ten words, which are the ten legal commandments. Of these words were three on one *tabula* written, and seven on the other. The first commandment is: 'The Lord thy

* SPANHEIM'S "Annals," p. 418.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 416, 419.

‡ SOAMES' "Bampton Lecture," p. 204.

God is one God.' The other word is : 'Take not thou thy Lord's name in vain.' The third word is : 'Be thou mindful that thou keep as a holy-day resting-day.' These three words stood on one *tabula*. On the other *tabula*, the first commandment was : 'Honour thy father and thy mother.' The other commandment : 'Copulate not thou unrightly.' The third : 'Slay thou no man.' The fourth : 'Steal not thou.' The fifth : 'Be not thou a false witness.' The sixth : 'Covet thou not another man's wife.' The seventh : 'Covet thou not another man's property.' These ten commandments are set for all men to hold."*

Thus having adopted corrupt practices, they shunned to declare unto the people "the whole counsel of God." It is painful and humiliating to know that the illustrious name of our great Alfred stands connected with this public mutilation of Scripture truth.

Having thus directed attention to these important doctrines of the Anglo-Saxon church, it becomes necessary to refer in a more general way to some others, which stand in a very intimate relation to each other, and to the spiritual and immortal interests of mankind. In our preceding investigation, we have elicited some information respecting the religious means which the people possessed in the ministrations of the English-Saxon church ; yet we wish to extend our inquiry still further into the practical theology of this ecclesiastical establishment, that we may be prepared to ascertain and to exhibit with greater clearness the nature and extent of its evangelical character and usefulness.

We have (perhaps, more than once) stated in the foregoing pages, that the obvious purpose of Almighty God, in the promulgation of His Gospel, was not the establishment of any earthly kingdom, nor the erection of a hierarchy modelled after any particular scheme or pattern ; much less was it, to re-arrange or to modify old Jewish or Heathenish rites, sacrifices, and doctrines, and to present them to the popular eye under new names, and in pretended connexion with His own truth. The great design of the Gospel was, that man-

* SOAMES' "Bampton Lecture," p. 242.

kind, being convinced, by the Spirit of God, "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," might repent, and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out, and that, being justified by faith, they might have peace with God, and fellowship with Him and with His Son Jesus Christ; that, being thus saved from sin, and walking in newness of life, the Spirit itself bearing witness with their spirits that they were the children of God, they might obtain a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, and look forward with a glorious hope that, when this earthly house of their tabernacle was dissolved, they might enter into a mansion of glory, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; in a word, that the mind of man might be enlightened, his spirit convinced of the sinfulness of sin, that he might be led in deep penitence to the throne of grace, and there by simple faith in the blood of Jesus might obtain "forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith."

Let us very briefly inquire, How far did the doctrines of the Anglo-Saxon church promote this object? how did it carry into accomplishment this great design? The reply, as far as our inquiries furnish *data*, and our judgment is competent to decide, is indeed unsatisfactory to a melancholy extent. The answer, the only answer, which the church appears to have provided, is furnished by the doctrine of sacramental efficacy, in association with confession, good works, penance, and purgatory. On these, in connexion with the end proposed, we shall offer a few observations.

That the Anglo-Saxon church adopted to the full extent the popish doctrine of sacramental efficacy, there can be little doubt. All the mysterious influence, the miraculous agency, and the imagined necessarily-hallowing results of these ordinances, are clearly, fully, and explicitly stated in authentic Saxon formularies. The "Paschal Homily" of Ælfric says, "A Heathen child is christened; yet he altereth not his shape without, though he be changed within. He is brought to the font-stone sinful, through Adam's dis-

obedience. Howbeit, he is washed from all sin within, though he hath not changed his shape without. Even so the holy font-water, that is called 'the well-spring of life,' is like in shape to other waters, and is subject to corruption; but the Holy Ghost's might cometh to the corruptible water, through the priest's blessing, and it may after wash the body and soul from all sin through ghostly might. Behold, now we see two things in this one creature: after true nature, that water is corruptible water, and after ghostly mystery, hath hallowing (healing) might. So also if we behold that holy *housel* after bodily understanding, then see we that it is a creature, corruptible, and mutable. If we acknowledge therein ghostly might, then understand we that life is therein, and that it giveth immortality to them that eat it with belief. Whatsoever is in that housel which giveth substance of life, that is of the ghostly might and invisible doing." *

Although in this passage transubstantiation is not taught, a saving efficacy is ascribed to the sacraments. This notion is abundantly confirmed by Bede, who repeatedly speaks of "the regeneration of holy baptism," and calls the eucharist "the heavenly *viaticum*," a term implying "all things necessary for a journey." With these doctrines, others equally objectionable were inculcated. The Saxon "Homily on the Catholic Faith" exhorts: "Come, let us earn that eternal life with God, through this belief and through *good deservings*." † A Saxon minister, in a very earnest address, asks, "What is better in this world than to be penitent for our transgressions, and to redeem them by alms-giving?" Another writer, speaking of monks, says, "By their *merits*, the anger of the supreme Judge is abated." ‡

Upon the death of a certain bishop, "alms are directed to be given out of his property, and his slaves to be set free, 'that by this means he may deserve to receive the

* L'ISLE'S Translation, quoted by SOAMES, in his "Bampton Lecture," p. 434.

† SOAMES' "Bampton Lecture," p. 65.

‡ TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. ii., pp. 495, 503.

fruit of retribution for his labours, and also forgiveness of sins.' Alwyn, founder of Ramsey, desired the monks to pray for him, 'and to place their merits against his defects.' And a monk prays for Edgar, 'that his good deeds may overbalance his evil deeds, and shield his soul at the last day.' " *

It would appear that the mind, being turned away from "the redemption that is in Christ," and distrusting the effects of human merit, was led to human suffering, as the last resource of a troubled spirit. Hence we find penances imposed in this world, and purgatorial fires expected in the next. It is not easy to conceive how these views could have been received and entertained, unless the great doctrine of "the forgiveness of sins" had been altogether forgotten. We find in the ninth century a Frankish council adopting the unevangelical principle, "that God allows no sin to pass unpunished; hence that offences unavenged while men remain upon the earth, are only reserved for penalties infinitely more severe in a future state." †

Under the influence of such opinions, men naturally submitted to pains and sufferings for the purpose of expiating on earth the guilt of their sins. The penances generally imposed were fasting, pilgrimages, laying aside arms and external pomp, wearing sackcloth, no cutting of the nails or hair, &c. Dunstan imposed on Edgar the penance of not wearing his crown for seven years; and the "deep-like," or severe penance, which was inflicted on aggravated crimes, is thus described:—"He must lay aside his weapons, and travel barefoot a long way; nor be sheltered of a night. He must fast and watch and pray, both day and night, and willingly weary himself, and be so careless of his dress, that the iron should not come to his hair or nails. He must not enter a warm bath, nor a soft bed; nor eat flesh, nor any thing by which he can be intoxicated; nor may he go inside of a church, but seek some holy place, and confess

* DR. SHORT'S "History of the Church of England," p. 30.

† SOAMES' "Bampton Lecture," p. 264.

his guilt and pray for intercession. He must kiss no man, but be always grieving for his sins." *

In this case, as in others, we perceive that wherever one departure from Scripture truth takes place, it necessarily generates several. From the operation of this principle we frequently find the errors of the church alternately becoming cause and effect, and producing and strengthening each other, until at length its doctrines and discipline stand out in bold contrast to the teaching of the word of God.

In the case before us, the notions which existed respecting penance necessarily contributed to place the most extravagant powers in the hands of the clergy. The "Penitential" of Theodore embraced every known shade of human transgression, and affixed to each iniquity a definite degree of penance; but the application of these rules to practical operation, of course, fell into the hands of the clergy, who naturally became the established dispensers of penitential discipline. They could not, however, execute this office without a sufficient knowledge of the delinquencies which they were to visit with punishment. Hence auricular confession, at least to some extent, was rendered necessary. And thus the priest occupied the position of a spiritual physician, who was entitled to ascertain the violations of religion and morality committed by the several members of the church, just as a medical practitioner would inquire into their physical disorders.

However plausible these principles and practices may appear, their operation soon developed their essential error. The men who were thus elevated to the super-human dignity of investigating the actual demerit of their fellow-men, and of assigning to each a proportionate amount of suffering, soon displayed the depth of their policy, and the suspicious character of their piety, by allowing the wealthy to buy off their quota of penance by the sacrifice of a portion of their substance.

At first, perhaps, the direct object of such an arrangement

* SHARON TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. iii., pp. 507, 508.

was useful and benevolent. The following is one of their regulations on this subject: "Men may redeem their penances by alms. He that hath ability may raise a church to the praise of God; and, if he has wherewithal, let him give land to it, and allow ten young men, so that they may serve in it, and minister the daily service. He may repair churches where he can, and make folk-ways, with bridges over deep waters, and over miry places; and let him assist poor men's widows, and step-children and foreigners. He may free his own slaves, and redeem the liberty of those of other masters, and especially the poor captives of war; and let them feed the needy, and house them, clothe and warm them, and give them bathing and beds."*

These principles were not long to be confined within such limits. The practice of accommodation was extended, until just ideas of the sinfulness of sin were lost in the direct pecuniary compensation which was demanded, or in the still more absurd and unmeaning exercises prescribed in default of payment. The law thus provided: "A man may redeem one day's fasting by a penny, or by repeating one hundred psalms. He may redeem a twelvemonth's fasting by thirty shillings, or may set a man free who is of that worth. And for one day's fast, he may sing six times the *Beati Immaculati*, and six Paternosters; or for a day's fast, he may kneel and bend sixty times to the earth, with a Paternoster; or may bend all his limbs to God, and fifteen times sing, *Miserere mei, Domine*, and fifteen Paternosters."†

Taking a fair and full view of these erroneous doctrines, the question presents itself to us, How far did those opinions draw our forefathers from the vital principles of Christianity? We agree with the remarks of an able writer on this subject. He observes: "The question must require the greatest caution, even in one who is thoroughly versed in the subject, and must be discussed rather as a matter of opinion than as a point of history. First, it must be premised, that it is not the abstract belief in erroneous doctrines

* TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. iii., p. 508.

† *Idem*, p. 509.

which perverts the faith of the Christian, but the tendency which such errors have to undermine the essentials of our religion. He who believes in the existence of a purgatory may still seek for salvation, and an escape from every future punishment, through his Saviour's blood. It is only when he learns to confide in some other means of safety, that the idea of purgatory will practically destroy his faith in Christ. The Christian may believe in transubstantiation, and still receive the elements with humble reliance on the great Sacrifice made once for all: but when he believes that the providing of masses can benefit his own soul, or that of others, he begins to lose sight of the Atonement, and to seek for new means of reconciliation. There is, perhaps, no reason why an individual holding wrong opinions of this sort may not trust in the same rock on which our faith is built; but the tendency of such opinions is to lead those who entertain them from relying on God, who is the Giver, to relying on the means which God has appointed, whereby we partake of His gifts."*

But while we admit the propriety of these sentiments, it is obvious that they can only be applicable where the great truths of our holy faith are as fully made known to the people at large, as are the errors to which we have referred. Was this the case in the Anglo-Saxon church? Could the entire depravity of human nature be scripturally exhibited by the same ministers who taught the efficacy of human merit? Or did they who constantly held up baptismal regeneration, also assure their people that, being justified by faith, they might obtain peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and, believing, might have the witness in themselves? Or could they who preached penances and purgatory, have had any distinct apprehension of the spiritual privileges which holy Scripture explicitly declares to belong to the children of God?

The conviction that these great and vital doctrines were either unknown to the Saxon teachers, or concealed by them, gives us the gloomiest idea of the spiritual condition

* DR. SHORT'S "History of the Church of England," p. 29.

of the early English church. It must always be pernicious to disseminate error; but when the truth is withheld, and unsound doctrines are made the prominent points of teaching, where can we look for hope? Thank God, there does remain some ground for the exercise of this hope. First, because the fundamental doctrine of the atonement, with several other important tenets, still remained; the redemption of the world by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ was yet taught in the formularies of the church, and in the discourses of her ministers. And, Secondly, and chiefly, we rejoice to know, that the Spirit of Christ is a light that enlighteneth every man. This holy influence would not be repelled by the absurd pretensions of priestly power, or the preposterous errors of priestly teaching; but, enlightening the conscience, subduing the will, bringing the written word of God, in living spiritual power, to act upon the heart, it might, and we *hope* it did, even in those unpropitious circumstances, lead many who were obedient to this divine teaching to a saving acquaintance with Christ, and ultimately to the enjoyment of everlasting life.

We close this branch of the subject with the following remark from an author, to whom we have been already indebted; and we should rejoice if those sentiments which a profound acquaintance with the Anglo-Saxon church elicited from his pen, were fully entertained by every dignitary of the established church at the present moment. "These are quite sufficient to prove that the fruit of unorthodox doctrines had grown up with the admission of those opinions; and though we may bring forward the Anglo-Saxon church as not having admitted all the errors of Rome, yet, when we would defend ourselves from the attacks of our enemies, *we must at once fall back upon the Bible, and profess ourselves ready to amend whatever part of our faith or practice does not correspond with the lively oracles of God.* They possessed the Bible in their native language; yet they admitted the traditions of men, and were perverted so far as not to place their faith and confidence entirely in their Redeemer's blood. They buried their faith under a

mass of unauthorized observances, and partially lost sight of that which is chiefly valuable in the Gospel. There were many errors which had not yet been introduced; but the way was fully prepared for their admission." *

If we had ample information concerning the personal character of the members of the Anglo-Saxon church; if their religious knowledge and feelings had been recorded; and if the practical effect which the Gospel exercised on their hearts and lives had been fully transmitted to our day; it would be an easy matter to test the accuracy of our opinions respecting the tendency of those doctrines to which we have referred. But this is almost entirely denied us. We have, indeed, numerous biographical sketches of prominent persons; but then it is their public and political, rather than their Christian, character which is given. They pass before us as men of the world, taking their part in the business and bustle of life, rather than as members of the family of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. It is not "the hidden man of the heart" that is portrayed; and it is this alone which would meet the wants of the case.

The Venerable Bede has been exhibited as a man eminent for piety. He was born about A.D. 672, and is supposed to have been an orphan; for, at the early age of seven years, he was placed under the care of Biscop, abbot of Wearmouth, to be educated. From that time he never left the monastery. As he grew up, he became remarkably studious, and entirely devoted himself to the acquirement of all those branches of knowledge which were taught at that time. Although he diligently observed the monastic rule of discipline, and daily attended the service of psalmody in the church, his greatest pleasure was to acquire and to communicate knowledge. "I found it delightful," he says, "always either to learn, to teach, or to write." It may be proper to remark here, that the abbot Biscop had previously travelled four or five times to Rome, where he became very intimate with Pope Agatho. He was also much captivated with the liturgy of the Roman church, and their manner of chanting;

* DR. SHORT'S "History of the Church of England," p. 30.

for until then the Gallican liturgy was used both in Britain and Ireland.

When Bede attained the age of nineteen, he was made a deacon ; and at thirty he was ordained a priest. On entering upon the responsible functions of this sacred office, a new class of duties occupied his attention. These are thus described by Saxon writers : "Take care that you be better and wiser in your spiritual craft than worldly men are in theirs, that you may be fit teachers of true wisdom. The priest should preach rightly the true belief, read fit-discourses, visit the sick, and baptize infants, and give the unction when desired. No one should be a covetous trader, nor a plunderer, nor drink often in wine-houses, nor be proud or boastful, nor wear ostentatious girdles, nor be adorned with gold, but do honour to himself by his good morals.

"They should not be litigious, nor quarrelsome, nor seditious, but should pacify the contending ; nor carry arms, nor go to fight, though some say that priests should carry weapons, when necessity requires ; yet the servant of God ought not to go to any war or military exercise. Neither a wife nor a battle becomes them, if they will rightly obey God, and keep His laws, as becomes their state."

Again, it is said : "They were to preach every Sunday to the people ; and always to give good examples. They were ordered to teach youth with care, and to draw them to some craft. They were to distribute alms, and urge the people to give them, and to sing the psalms during the distribution, and to exhort the people to intercede for the donors. They were forbidden to swear, and were to avoid ordeals. They were to recommend confession, penitence, and compensation ; to administer the sacrament to the sick, and to anoint him, if he desired it ; and the priest was always to keep oil ready for this purpose and for baptism. He was neither to hunt, nor hawk, nor dice ; but to play with his book, as became his condition." *

* WILKINS' *Leges Anglo-Saxonicae*, quoted in GILES' "Life of Bede," p. lviii.

Yet a diligent devotedness to these duties was not sufficient for the ardent spirit of Bede. He still prosecuted his studies and literary labours. It is, however, his personal religion to which we direct special attention; and this is best displayed in the following account of his death:—

“ He was seized at the latter end of March, about a fortnight before Easter, with a shortness of breath, unaccompanied by other pain, but which he perceived to have in it the symptoms of mortal disease. He lived on, till the eve of Ascension Day, May 26th, in continual prayers and thanksgivings, still giving daily instructions to his pupils, and discoursing with them; and at night, when his disorder allowed him but short intervals of rest, he watched only to utter psalms of praise. He had often on his tongue the words of St. Paul, ‘It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;’ and other texts of Scripture, by which he admonished his hearers to awake from the sleep of the soul, by thinking beforehand of their last hour. To the same purpose, he repeated some solemn verses in the old Saxon language:—

‘ Ere the pilgrim soul go forth
On its journey far and lone,
Who is he that yet on earth
All his needful work hath done?

‘ Who foreweighs the joy or *scathe*
That his parted ghost shall know
Endless, when the day of death
Seals his doom for weal or woe?’

“ He also repeated some collects used in the service of the church, particularly that of which he was reminded by the holy season of the Lord’s ascension: ‘O King of glory, Lord of might, who didst this day ascend in triumph above all the heavens; we beseech Thee, leave us not orphans, but send to us the Promise of the Father, the Spirit of truth. Praised be Thy name!’ When he came to the words, ‘Leave us not orphans,’ he burst into tears, remembering perhaps how the God of the fatherless had been his protector from his youth, and continued for some time weeping,

and silently pouring out his heart to his heavenly Benefactor ; while all who were with him mingled their tears with his. Often he said with thankfulness, ‘ God scourgeth every son whom He receiveth ; ’ and spoke with gladness of the mercy that was shown him in the infirmity which he was now counted worthy to suffer. Of his approaching departure, he said, in the words of St. Ambrose, ‘ I have not so lived as that I should be unwilling to live longer among you ; but neither do I fear to die, for we have a merciful God.’

“ All the time of his sickness he was still employed upon two works : one, a set of extracts from the writings of Isidore, bishop of Seville, which he thought valuable, but requiring selection ; and, ‘ I do not wish my boys,’ he said, meaning his pupils, ‘ to be employed after my death in reading what is unprofitable : ’ the other, a translation of the Gospel of St. John into the old English or Saxon language. On the Tuesday before Ascension Day, his breathing became more difficult, and his feet began slightly to swell ; yet he continued all day to teach and dictate to his pupils with his usual cheerfulness ; saying sometimes, ‘ Learn your best to-day ; for I know not how long I may last, or how soon my Maker may call me away.’ His pupils perceived that he foresaw his end approaching. He lay down to rest that night, but passed it without sleep, in prayer and thanksgiving.

“ At the dawn of the next day, he called his young companions, and bade them lose no time in writing the rest of the task he had begun with them. So they continued employed till nine o’clock, when, as the office of the day required, they went in procession with the relics of the saints. One, however, remained with him ; but, fearing it might be too much for his weakness, he said, ‘ There is still, my dear master, one chapter wanting to complete the translation ; but I must not ask you to dictate any more.’ ‘ Nay,’ said Bede, ‘ it is easy to me. Take your pen and write ; only lose no time.’ He did so, and the work was nearly finished ; when, about three o’clock in the afternoon, Bede called to Cuthbert, afterwards abbot of Jarrow, who wrote the account

of his death. 'I have,' said he, 'in my little private chest some few valuables, some pepper, frankincense, and a few scarfs; run speedily, and bring the priests of our monastery to me, that I may distribute to them such little gifts as God has put it into my power to give.' While he did so, he begged them to offer masses for him, and to remember him in their prayers; which they readily promised. 'It is now time,' he said, 'that I should return to Him who created me. I have lived long, and my merciful Judge has well provided for me the kind of life I have led. I feel the hour of my freedom is at hand, and I desire to be released, and to be with Christ.'

"Thus he passed the time in peace and holy joy till the evening. The youth who had before attended him, then wishing to have the work completed, once more reminded him that the last sentence still remained. 'Write quickly, then,' said Bede; and gave him the closing words. 'It is now finished,' said the youth, when he had set them down. 'You say well,' replied Bede; 'it is finished. Support my head between thy hands, and let me, while I sit, still look towards the holy place in which I used to pray, that, though I can no longer kneel, I may still call upon my Father.' Shortly afterwards he sunk from his seat to the floor of his cell; and, uttering his last hymn of praise, 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,' when he had named the name of the blessed Spirit, he breathed away his gentle soul."*

Although this affecting narrative brings before us matter too holy and sublime for criticism, it will be necessary at least to make one or two observations on the state of mind which it unfolds.

We cannot doubt that the great man whose death is here portrayed was truly a subject of divine grace. Its operation and influence on his heart and life are evident and indisputable. At the same time, it does seem that in this rare case there is not a full exhibition of Gospel privilege. Even Bede did not express that sense of the forgiveness of his sins,

* CHURTON'S "Early English Church," p. 149.

and of his adoption into the family of God, which the New-Testament writings clearly teach ; nor did he evidence that joy in the Holy Ghost which is unspeakable and full of glory ; nor that glorious hope which assures the heart, that to be “absent from the body” is to be “present with the Lord,” and which the early Christians so abundantly realized. Nor, amid all the satisfactory proofs of his piety, can we forget his dying request, that prayers should be said for him, and masses offered on his behalf, after he was dead. We are well aware of the explanation and apology which have been given on this point ; but they are not satisfactory. The circumstance shows that Bede had not learned to rely simply on the “precious blood of Christ” with that “lively faith” which brings “the full assurance of hope ;” and therefore, although he felt a measure of peace and confidence, his spirit turned to masses and prayers performed after his death, as being possibly efficacious for his happiness and salvation.

We have been the more particular in this narration, because it exhibits the practical religion of the Anglo-Saxon church in its most favourable aspect. In the best age of that church, we behold one of her holiest sons, a man thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures, of great seriousness of spirit, and of acknowledged piety ; and if in his case we find the religion of the heart affected by prevailing error, what must have been the condition of less-favoured individuals, or of darker ages ? We must not forget, that although the Scriptures were not prohibited, they were not common. In England, copies of them could not be numerous in any language, much less in that of the people. They would, therefore, have to form their religious views, and to build their faith, almost entirely on the principles embodied in the liturgies, formularies, and ministrations of the church. As these contained little truth and great errors, the people would be in much danger of being guided by the commandments and traditions of men rather than by the word of God.

It may cast an additional ray of light on the practical religion of this period, to give an anecdote preserved in the Note-Book of king Alfred, and thence transmitted to our

times. It states that Aldhelm, who died A.D. 709, "observed with pain that the peasantry were become negligent in their religious duties ; and that no sooner was the church service ended, than they all hastened to their homes and labours, and could with difficulty be persuaded to attend to the exhortations of the preacher. He watched his occasion, and stationed himself, in the character of a minstrel, on the bridge over which the people had to pass. Here he soon collected a crowd of hearers by the beauty of his verse. When he found that he had gained possession of their attention, he gradually introduced, among the popular poetry which he was reciting to them, words of a more serious nature, till at length he succeeded in impressing upon their minds a truer feeling of religious devotion."*

Instances like this afford an assurance, that, although serious errors had been introduced into the church, there did exist among some of her ministers an appreciation of vital godliness, and an earnest desire to promote its influence among the people. Yet in succeeding centuries the prospect gradually became more gloomy ; error increased ; unchecked superstition rolled on in its fatal and resistless course ; and the measure of truth which had been brought before the public mind decreased, or was neutralized by unmeaning ceremonies. Hence the religion of the Gospel fades away from our vision ; and the history of the church, instead of being a history of the triumphs of Christianity, sinks into a record of the struggles, intolerance, and success of a corporate establishment.

* WRIGHT's *Biographia Britannica Literaria*, p. 215.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PRIESTCRAFT, CORRUPTION, AND DECLINE OF THE
ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH.

OUR outline of the history of the church was, in a previous chapter, brought down to the death of Wilfrid, which took place, A.D. 731, when Egbert, brother to Eadbert, king of Northumberland, was advanced to the see of York. By the influence of his royal birth and high connexions this prelate recovered the dignity of a metropolitan, which had been enjoyed by Paulinus, the first bishop of York, and obtained a pall from Rome as a badge of that dignity.

In the year 740, on the death of Nothelmus, archbishop of Canterbury, Cuthbert, bishop of Hereford, was translated to that see. On this occasion, Winfrid, an Englishman, who had been an intimate friend of the new prelate, and had been appointed archbishop of Mentz, under the name of Boniface, wrote him a letter of congratulation on his elevation. This epistle contains several references to things connected with the church of England, which called for immediate attention and amendment. Among these he notices the gaudy dress and intemperate lives of the clergy, and the sacrilege of great men in seizing the government of monasteries, and obliging the monks to perform the most servile work, in building their castles, &c. ; a thing unknown in every other part of the Christian world. He also exhorts him to prevent nuns and other females from going in pilgrimage to Rome under pretence of religious motives, as they were generally debauched before they returned, and many of them became common prostitutes in the cities of France and Italy.

To remedy these and other evils, Boniface advised the new archbishop to call a council ; and, for his guidance in the matter, sent him a copy of the canons of a synod which

had been lately held at Mentz, in which he had presided as the pope's legate. Whether it was the result of this advice, or not, cannot now be determined ; but a council was shortly after held at Cloveshoo. Among sundry other arrangements, many excellent admonitions were then given to the bishops, clergy, and people. " Bishops were directed to visit every part of their diocesses at least once every year, for the purpose of preaching and performing the other duties of their sacred function ; to keep a watchful eye over the inferior clergy, who still generally lived in monasteries ; and to be very careful in examining into the morals and learning of those whom they admitted into holy orders. Abbots were commanded to take care of the clergy in their respective Houses ; and the clergy generally were enjoined to be diligent in visiting, preaching, and baptizing ; to learn to construe in their own language the Creed and Lord's Prayer, and the words used in the celebration of mass and in the office of baptism. The people were exhorted to learn the Creed and Lord's Prayer by heart, religiously to observe the Lord's Day, to frequent communion, fasting, confession, and alms-giving. Some very singular directions are given to the common people who did not understand Latin, about the manner of their joining in the public prayers and songs of the church, which were all in that language. In particular, they are allowed to affix to the words any meaning they pleased in their own minds, and to pray in their hearts for any thing they wanted, no matter how foreign to the real sense of the public prayers."* Prayers for the dead were also enjoined by this council ; but nothing was done to effect a scriptural reformation in the church.

This prelate, Cuthbert, is said to have first introduced into this country the custom of interments in church-yards ; a practice which, however innocent in itself, appears to have had its origin in the superstitions which at this time prevailed in the church. The first step toward this custom was the building of churches over the graves of martyrs. This was followed by the interment of kings and emperors in the

* DR. HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. ii., p. 162.

porch, or outer buildings connected with the church. The council of Braga in Spain, A.D. 563, permitted to be buried, if need required, in the church-yard, and not in the church. At length eminent persons were permitted to be interment within the walls of the sacred edifice.* of justification by faith having been forgotten, and death having been viewed as the means of preparing for the enjoyments of heaven, it appeared to be no longer the place the mouldering remains of men under the care of the priest. In this way, many of our most important usages arose from the most unworthy and superstitious views!

Some remarkable circumstances occurred about the year 1000 which show the extent of this superstition. Upon the death of Cuthbert, the archbishops of Canterbury had the body buried by the monks of St. Augustine in their church, and in this age of relics the practice was of great value to that fraternity. For some unexplained reason, Cuthbert resolved to be buried in his own cathedral. Perceiving his end to be approaching, he gave orders to his domestics to keep his death secret until after his death. This was done; and when the monks of St. Augustine came to bury him of his decease, and came for the body, they found it was already buried. This provoked them beyond measure. They called the deceased prelate "a rogue, a false friend, and other names equally expressive of the regard which they entertained for his memory.

Cuthbert was succeeded in the archiepiscopal see by Wulfstan, who survived his elevation only three years. Upon his death, he made precisely the same arrangements for his funeral as his predecessor had done. When, therefore, the monks of St. Augustine, came with a body of men to claim the corpse as the property of their church, and found himself forestalled a second time, he considered the matter as such a serious infraction of his rights, that he made a solemn appeal to the pope. This affair, which was so unimportant and even ridiculous it may appear

* BINGHAM'S "Antiquities," book xxiii., chap.

considered by the canons of Christchurch, who were chiefly implicated, as an evil which it was absolutely necessary to avert. But how was this to be done? An extremely simple mode presented itself; and it was followed. These very canons had to elect an archbishop for the vacant see, and they at once selected the enraged Lambert; a course of proceeding which had its desired effect.

It is painful and humiliating to have to record such events as parts of a history of the church of Christ. Yet, notwithstanding the brevity that we have imposed upon ourselves, it becomes absolutely necessary to show, at least to some extent, the operation of those specious, but unsound and unscriptural, principles which had been introduced into the church. Just about this time, Egbert, archbishop of York, published the following, with other canons which are too indelicate to be transcribed: "If a layman hath carnal knowledge of a nun, let him do penance for two years, &c.; she three. If a child be begotten betwixt them, then four years; *if they kill it*, then seven years' penance." *

About the middle of the eighth century, several important and sudden changes took place in the political relation and condition of the Italian states, which greatly affected the temporal power of the bishop of Rome, and consequently exercised a mighty influence over the whole of the Christian world.

Although the emperors of the East, who resided at Constantinople, were still the nominal sovereigns of Rome and Italy, the distance of their situation and other circumstances rendered their authority feeble and precarious. Hence, when the emperor Leo Isaurus published his famous edict, A.D. 730, against the worship of images, commanding them to be removed out of churches, the bishop of Rome stoutly opposed the execution of the decree, and encouraged the chief cities of Italy to shake off all subjection to the emperors of the East. Astolphus, king of Lombardy, taking advantage of these dissensions, over-ran Italy, and threatened the destruction of the church of Rome. In this extremity, the pope,

* FULLER'S "Church History," vol. i., p. 154.

Stephen II., applied to Pepin, king of France, for assistance; who, marching into Italy at the head of a great army, recovered from the Lombards all the countries which they had conquered. Instead of restoring these territories to the emperors of the East, Pepin bestowed the city and territories of Rome, the exarchate of Ravenna, and several other cities, on the pope; who was thus raised from the very brink of ruin to be a powerful temporal sovereign.* From this time the bishops of Rome prosecuted their claims to spiritual dominion over the Christian world with increasing energy and success.

About this period, great changes occurred in the relative strength and position of the several Saxon kingdoms. Some had already become extinct. Wessex had absorbed Sussex. The more powerful and martial states were looking with an eager eye on their neighbours, and preparing for invading their independence. In this career of ambition, the church was used as an auxiliary, whenever her influence was necessary. On such occasions she did not forget to promote the secular interests of the ecclesiastical establishment. Offa, king of Mercia, who was by far the most powerful prince of the Heptarchy, resolved to erect the see of Lichfield into an archbishopric. Lambert of Canterbury offered all the opposition in his power to this measure; but it was unavailing. Offa's influence prevailed; and Hegbert, bishop of Lichfield, was declared an archbishop by the pope, A.D. 787. This step, as might have been expected, produced serious disputes between the new dignitary and the archbishops of Canterbury and York. To adjust these, the pope sent two foreign bishops into the country as his legates. These ecclesiastics visited the several archiepiscopal sees, and held councils in

* DR. HENRY'S "History of Britain," vol. ii., p. 164. GIBBON'S "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," vol. vi., p. 198. The division of the great Roman empire into ten independent sovereignties, and the subjection of three of these to the pope, constitute such an obvious and remarkable fulfilment of the prophecy of Daniel, that it cannot escape notice: "Then I would know the truth of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell." See Dan. vii. throughout.

Mercia and at York. The former met at a place called Calcuith. Here the legate presented the regulations or canons which he had brought from Rome. These, as he states in his report, were maturely considered and universally approved.

These canons, says Henry, "which are twenty in number, contain a kind of system of the ecclesiastical politics of those times, in which we may discern the clergy beginning to advance several new claims, such as a divine right to the tenth of all the possessions of the laity, and an exemption from being tried and punished by the civil magistrates."* Tithes appear to have been recognised in the Christian church as early as the fourth century; and various laws were made by bishops, in concurrence with secular princes, obliging Christians to give to ecclesiastics the tithe of their revenues and of the fruits of the earth. But these regulations were made at different times and in different places; and as no uniform method was established, the precise period when tithes were first legally instituted is uncertain. "But they were paid as far back as the sixth century; though not every where, nor under the same obligations. F. Paul, in his Treatise of Benefices, observes, that, till the eighth or the ninth century, tithes were not paid in the East, nor in Africa."† The claims which were made for tithes in Britain at the council of Calcuith were established by circumstances which soon after occurred.

Offa, who had succeeded in obtaining for his kingdom of Mercia the dignity of an archbishopric, was still intent on further aggrandizement. The kings of East Anglia had long been dependent on Mercia; yet they retained the title and prerogatives of sovereignty. Ethelred, who now governed this little state, was a young prince of the most amiable person and character, and greatly beloved by his subjects. "With the advice of his council, he made proposals of marriage to Althrida, daughter of Offa, which were favourably

* HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. ii., p. 166.

† TAYLOR'S Edition of CALMET'S "Dictionary of the Bible," article *Tithes*.

received; and he was invited to the court of Mercia to conclude the match. When he arrived there, he was basely murdered, and his dominions were annexed to those of Mercia." *

Having perpetrated this diabolical crime, Offa fled to Rome to seek a pardon, which was readily obtained for *three hundred and sixty-five marks*.† "Being touched," says Collier, "with remorse for this barbarous murder, he made a grant to the church of all the tithe in his dominions; and gave a great estate in land to the cathedral of Hereford, where king Ethelbert was buried."‡ Thus the claims put forth at the synod of Calcuith were recognised in the kingdom of Mercia by the king, and supported by law. Offa's gratitude to the church did not stop here: he resolved to erect a splendid monastery to the honour of St. Alban, on the spot where the bones of this martyr were discovered; the identical place having been pointed out in a miraculous manner to Offa and his bishops. The pope, of course, approved this design also; and granted to the new monastery, as a very special privilege, exemption from all episcopal and archiepiscopal jurisdiction, making it subject to no authority but that of the Roman see. Thus the papal court granted as a great favour that which was sure to consolidate its own power, and to increase the overgrown influence which it had previously acquired. More than this: king Offa, the murderer, felt personally grateful for this favour; and finding a school at Rome for the education of the English, he settled a further maintenance upon it, ordering a penny (Saxon) to be collected yearly of every family in his dominions, whose lands amounted to thirty pence annual rent. Thus religion degenerated into political craft. Alcuin, who died A.D. 804, testified from his own knowledge, that "the monasteries were polluted with adulteries, and the altars with perjuries." §

* DR. HENRY'S "History of Great Britain," vol. ii., p. 40.

† TIMPSON'S "British Ecclesiastical History," p. 110.

‡ COLLIER'S "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 334.

§ BURTON'S *Monasticon*, p. 27, quoted by TIMPSON, in his "British Ecclesiastical History," p. 112.

Previous to this, Ina, king of Wessex, like Offa, of Mercia, had established a scholastic foundation at Rome, supported also by an annual tax of a penny, levied on each family in the kingdom.* These sums were afterward claimed as a tribute from England to the see of Rome, under the title of "Peter-pence."

The course of political events was still propitious to what was called "the cause of the church." A few years after the death of Offa, Egbert, the great-grandson of Inigils, the brother of Ina, ascended the throne of Wessex. With his great capacity and military talents, he took advantage of the disorder and distraction that prevailed in the smaller states, and especially of the gradual decay of the kingdom of Mercia, which enabled him, A.D. 829, to assume the government of the whole country, under the title of "king of England." Egbert died A.D. 838, and was succeeded by his son Ethelwolf, at that time subdeacon of the cathedral at Winchester. Brought up to the church, and extremely superstitious, this prince entered heartily into the designs of the clergy; and as the Danes had now begun to ravage different parts of the country, he had every motive to conciliate a party who, in addition to their spiritual claims, at this time exercised great political influence in every part of the kingdom.

We consequently find this prince holding a famous synod, or convention, of the bishops and temporal nobility, at Winchester. At this meeting Ethelwolf granted the tithe of the kingdom to the church. This remarkable charter, translated, runs thus: "I, Ethelwolf, by the grace of God king of the West Saxons, with the advice of the bishops, earls, and all persons of condition in my dominions, have, for the health of my soul, the good of my people, and the prosperity of my kingdom, fixed upon a prudent and serviceable resolution of granting the tenth part of the lands throughout our whole kingdom to the holy churches, and ministers of religion officiating and settled in them, to be

* TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. i., p. 399.

perpetually enjoyed by them, with all the advantages of a free tenure and estate. It being likewise our will and pleasure, that this unalterable and indefeasible grant shall for ever remain discharged from all service due to the crown, and all other encumbrances incident to lay fees ; which grant has been made by us in honour of our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed Virgin, and all saints ; and out of regard to the paschal solemnity, and that God Almighty might vouchsafe His blessing upon us and our posterity. This charter is engrossed and signed in the year of our Lord DCCCLIV., indiction the second, at the feast of Easter.”*

Having gratified the clergy by this act, Ethelwolf visited Rome, where he was well received by the pope, on account of his liberality to the church. He spent a whole year on his journey, feasting his devotion with the holy relics and the pompous ceremonies presented to his view in the churches and chapels. The presents which the West-Saxon king carried to the pope were peculiarly splendid. A crown of pure gold, weighing four pounds ; two golden vessels, called *bancus* ; a sword, adorned with pure gold ; two golden images ; four Saxon dishes of silver gilt, besides valuable dresses, are enumerated by his contemporary, Anastasius. The king also gave a donative of gold to all the Roman clergy and nobles, and one of silver to the people.†

In this journey Ethelwolf was accompanied by his youngest son Alfred, then seven years of age. The father caused the pope to place the crown on the head of his boy with great solemnity ; but the precise intention of this act has not been satisfactorily explained. During his stay at Rome, the English sovereign rebuilt the school founded by king Ina, which had been burnt down ; and, desiring to endow this college in a more liberal manner than his predecessor had done, he extended the tax of Peter-pence all over his dominions, which till then had only been levied in Wessex and Mercia. He obliged himself to send to Rome, yearly, the

* BURTON's *Monasticon*, vol. i., quoted by COLLIER, in his "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 368.

† TURNER's "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. i., p. 490.

sum of three hundred marks ; two hundred of which were to be expended in *wax tapers* for the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul, and the remaining one hundred for the pope's private use.*

Returning through France, Ethelwolf married Judith, daughter of Charles the Bald, king of France, and granddaughter of Charlemagne. But having received information of a meditated rebellion at home, which was headed by his eldest son Ethelbald, he hastened to England. This revolt was counselled and supported by Alstan, bishop of Sherborne, who represented the king as a weak man, fit only to be the inmate of a monastery. We cannot at present pretend to explore all the motives which prompted these proceedings, nor to ascertain to what extent ecclesiastical interests called priestly influence into operation. The result is, however, well known. Ethelwolf averted the threatened mischief by allowing Ethelbald the government of Wessex, and by a new grant to the church of the tithes of the whole kingdom, the charter of which was signed before the great altar of Peter's church at Winchester, November 3rd, A.D. 855. This second charter is very similar to the first, only containing still stronger indications of superstition.

“In token of gratitude for this grant, the bishops ordained, ‘that all our brethren and sisters shall, in every church to which they belong, once every week, (on Wednesday,) sing fifty psalms ; and every presbyter shall, on the same day, sing two masses, one for king Ethelwolf, and another for his nobles, who have been consenting to this grant, for the redemption and remission of their sins. And they shall say for the king, while he shall live, the prayer, *Oremus, Deus, qui iustificas, &c.* ; and for the nobles, *Præ-tende, Domine, &c.* But after he shall be dead, they shall pray for the king in particular, and for his nobles, being dead, in general. And let this be constituted for all the days of Christianity, as firmly as this grant is constituted

* TIMPSON'S “ British Ecclesiastical History,” p. 115.

for as long as the Christian faith shall flourish in the English nation.' " *

By this charter the secular condition of the clergy was greatly improved; but it is questionable how far it was effectual in the promotion of vital religion. It favoured the spirit of popery, and afforded a stronger inducement for avaricious and worldly men to enter the church on account of its emoluments and immunities. But real religion and solid learning rapidly diminished. Milner says, "The decline of godliness was grievous;" and it is well known that when king Alfred came to the throne he complained that from the Humber to the Thames, there was not a priest who understood the Liturgy in his mother tongue, or who could translate the easiest piece of Latin; and that from the Thames to the sea, the ecclesiastics were still more ignorant. Thus, while the church rose to dignity and honour, religion and learning sank into ruin. What was the cause of this strange anomaly? Does it not prove that the church was identified neither with intellectual cultivation nor with true religion? This is, indeed, the melancholy conclusion which the entire history of this period presses upon the mind: and the more fully the subject is investigated, the more clearly does this appear to be the real state of the case.

On the death of Ethelwolf, the throne was successively filled by his sons Ethelbald, Ethelbert, and Alfred; the last of whom entered upon the government, A.D. 871, when in his twenty-second year. During the greater part of his reign, as well as of the preceding, the country was constantly harassed by the irruptions and ravages of the Danes. Consequently, all the evils of the country, social and political, were vastly aggravated. But, while we admit that this period, on this account, affords an unfavourable exhibition of national manners and religion, we must not too hastily conclude that the decay of piety and learning is to be attributed entirely to the Danish invasion. On the contrary, this scourge is by Huntingdon ascribed to the irreligion of the

* For the original of this document, see FULLER's "Church History of Britain," vol. i., p. 68.

Saxons ; and Alfred the Great, in one of the speeches which he delivered to his troops before a battle, admits as much.

There is, then, some reason for believing that, at least, a part of this decline of piety and learning preceded the Danish invasion. Our limits will not allow us to investigate the history of the church throughout these perilous times ; yet our object cannot be secured without exhibiting, with clearness, the public and political operation of the Anglo-Saxon church. We will, therefore, pass over this season of bloodshed and devastation, and will allow time for the transcendant abilities of Alfred to subdue his powerful enemies, and to restore peace to his distracted country, as well as to contribute by his pious efforts to the revival of religion and learning. Nor will we resume our sketch, until after Athelstane had, by his great talents, consolidated and secured what the wisdom and the sword of his grandfather had achieved. When England was thus raised to a state of high respectability among the nations of Western Europe, and when ample time had been allowed for the full development of that scheme of ecclesiastical polity, and for the perfect operation of those principles and doctrines, which had been imported from Rome, then, taking advantage of the life and exertions of one of the most eminent ecclesiastics of his day, we will endeavour to exhibit the real condition of the Anglo-Saxon church, when all the elements of its constitution were in active operation, and when it existed in all the maturity of its strength.

In referring to the life of Dunstan for this purpose, no injury is done to any party. His character and conduct are as highly extolled by Romanists, as they are reprobated by Protestants. The facts will, therefore, speak for themselves. Another and important reason for this proceeding is, that the history of this prelate is the history of the English church during his life-time. No other man brought out so vividly the true character of his order, or afforded, by such a course of varied and striking action, so many opportunities of judging of the motives by which he was actuated, and the genius of the establishment to which he belonged.

Dunstan was born near Glastonbury,* in the reign of Edward the Elder. His family was of great distinction. One of his uncles was primate, another was bishop of Winchester; and he was remotely allied to the royal family. A marvellous miracle is said to have preceded his birth. A short time before that event, his parents were at church on the festival of the purification, known in this country by the name of "Candlemas," because all who attended it carried lighted candles, with which they walked in procession after the service. In the midst of mass, the lamps and tapers were suddenly extinguished; the church, though at mid-day, was filled with a preternatural darkness; and while the whole congregation, in fear and trembling, wondered what this might portend, a fire descended from heaven, and kindled the taper which Dunstan's mother held; thus miraculously foreshowing how great a light should from her be born into the world.

The same miraculous interposition is made to attend his future career. While yet a child, Dunstan was taken by his father to the same church, to pass the vigil of some great holy-day in devotional exercises. Falling asleep, Dunstan saw in a vision a venerable old man, with a heavenly countenance, in garments white as snow; who, telling him that that building must be enlarged and elevated, led him over it, and, measuring the ground with a line, impressed upon his mind ineffaceably the plan and dimensions of the work which he was appointed to accomplish.

At this period, history was so obscured by fable, and imaginary miracles had been so engrafted on the popular traditions, that it was the general and undisputed belief that the church which then existed at Glastonbury was originally built by miraculous agency, without human aid, for the use of Joseph of Arimathea; and, although composed of basket-work, it was supposed to have stood identically the same during nine hundred years.

* For this sketch of the life of Dunstan, we are principally indebted to SOUTHEY'S "Book of the Church," and his *Vindiciæ Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ*, with occasional assistance from other authorities.

Other legends, equally absurd, but equally displaying the spirit of the church in this age, were invented to do honour to this celebrated locality. It was said that St. Patrick had chosen this sanctuary as a place of retirement, and had learnt, from a writing miraculously discovered there, that whosoever should visit the Near Tor, in honour of St. Michael, should obtain thirty years' indulgence. In confirmation of this, Patrick's arm was withered, till he made it known that our Lord had chosen that eminence for a place where men might acceptably invoke the archangel. St. David, it was also reported, came to Glastonbury, with the intent of consecrating its church to the holy Virgin ; but our Lord appeared to him in a vision, and told him that the ceremony must not be profaned by any man's repeating it ; for He Himself had long ago performed it, to the honour of His blessed mother. Our Lord, having perforated the bishop's hand with His finger, in proof of the reality of the vision, then left him, with an assurance that during mass on the ensuing day the wound should be closed as suddenly as it was inflicted ; a promise which did not fail to be fulfilled. We might fill a volume with such fables ; but we forbear.

At this time the monks of Glastonbury contributed to their own support by educating the children of the nobles. Dunstan was one of their pupils. His body was feeble and diminutive ; but his intellect was vigorous and commanding. His severe application to study had brought on a disease ; and for several days he was delirious, and lay as at the point of death. From this illness he recovered ; and his recovery was also accompanied by a miracle. As soon as he had attained the requisite age, he entered into minor orders, and took the clerical habit in the monastery where he was educated. He was now remarkable for diligence in his studies, for his various accomplishments, and for manual dexterity. He composed music ; he played upon the harp, organ, and cymbals ; wrought metals, worked as an artist in wax, wood, ivory, silver, and gold ; and excelled in design, in painting, and in caligraphy. To this wide range of knowledge Dunstan was accused of adding studies which at this time were

regarded with peculiar abhorrence : it was supposed that he cultivated an acquaintance with the historical songs and magical verses of the Saxon Heathen.

This age presented remarkable opportunities for practising upon popular credulity. Not only, on the one hand, were the people extremely superstitious and ignorant, but the monks and clergy had, on the other, access to very important means of instruction. These were generally neglected by the clergy. When, therefore, a powerful and determined intellect, like that of Dunstan, had made this circle of knowledge his own, and when all was brought into exercise under the guidance of a lofty and brilliant genius, impelled by a daring ambition, we need not wonder that such a man should stand out in such an age as a person invested with superhuman powers. It is also probable that many arts, generally supposed to be of modern invention, were then well known, and, from the circumstances of the times, were frequently employed.

The following may afford one instance of this. A noble woman, who intended to embroider some rich vestments as a present for the church, requested Dunstan to trace the pattern for her. He hung his harp upon the wall, while he was thus employed ; and the tune and words of a well-known anthem were heard distinctly to proceed from it, although no human hand was near. The matron and her maidens ran out, exclaiming that Dunstan was wiser than he ought to be. Ventriloquism was not suspected : and as his life was not such as might entitle him to perform miracles, the premature trick was ascribed to magic. This led to his banishment from court, and had nearly cost him his life.

Escaping, however, from this danger, he went to his uncle Elphege, bishop of Winchester ; at whose earnest persuasion, although himself inclined to prefer a married life, Dunstan consented to become a monk. He now returned to Glastonbury, and built for himself a miserable cell, five feet long, and two and a half feet wide. This was his forge and his workshop, as well as his dwelling-place ; and in it he performed the most notorious miracle in the monastic history of

England. Here the devil often came to annoy him ; sometimes in the shape of a bear, a dog, a serpent, or a fox : but on one occasion he appeared in a human form, and began to tempt the saint with wanton conversation. Dunstan, having recognised his visitor, endured it until he had heated his tongs sufficiently ; and then, with the red-hot instrument, he seized him by the nose. On this the fiend gave utterance to the most horrible cries, and thus disturbed the people who resided in the neighbourhood. These, on inquiring, in the morning, the cause of this strange uproar, were told by Dunstan what had happened ; and the miraculous story obtained for him the credit which he sought.

On the death of Athelstane, Dunstan was recalled to court ; but he was soon after sent back to his convent, through the influence of those who disliked his views, or dreaded his ambition. King Edmund, however, having narrowly escaped death in a stag-hunt, repented of his conduct, and made him abbot of Glastonbury. Dunstan took advantage of this circumstance to introduce the Benedictine regulations into the monastery. He was the first abbot of that order in England. At the same time with this preferment of Dunstan, the king granted special privileges to the abbey, enlarging and extending the previous grants made by Cuthred and Ina. He constituted the town of Glastonbury more free than other places ; “granting to its abbot power as well in causes known as unknown, in small and in great, above and under the earth, on dry land and in the water, in woods and in plains ; and inhibiting, under God’s curse, any one, either bishop, duke, prince, or their servants, from entering to exercise authority there.” This privilege was written, in letters of gold, in a splendid book of the Gospels which he presented to the church.

After the death of Edmund, Dunstan retained the same favour with his successor, who offered him the bishopric of Crediton. This dignity, in opposition to the king’s wishes, and the entreaties of the queen-mother, Dunstan declined. His motives were not long concealed. On the following morning he told the king that in the night St. Peter, St. Paul,

and St. Andrew appeared to him in a vision, when the former chastised him with a ferule for having refused to be of their fellowship. They warned him not to commit the sin a second time, nor to refuse the primacy, when it was offered him ; and they told him that he must one day travel to Rome.

This ambitious monk had marked out, as the object of his life, the herculean task of reforming the Anglo-Saxon church. Not that he aimed at bringing its doctrines and practices back to a perfect conformity with the dictates of revealed truth : this would have been a task worthy of a great and a holy mind ; but it ill accorded with the worldly ambition which absorbed the soul of Dunstan. His reformation implied a complete conformity, not only to the legal observances, but also to the entire spirit, of the church of Rome. Hence he turned his attention to enforce the celibacy of the clergy, as one of the most important requisites to the well-being of the Christian cause.

Odo, the primate, zealously seconded these efforts. He was the son of a Dane, and had fought by the side of Athelstane, after he was made a bishop. When the primacy was offered him, he would not accept it, until he had professed among the Benedictines. The object of these dignitaries was, to compel the clergy to put away their wives, to establish the Benedictine rule in all the monasteries, to expel the secular priests who, according to the old custom, resided with their respective bishops, and to introduce monks in their stead.

These schemes were carried on under the protection of royal favour, during the reigns of Edmund and Edred ; but they were sternly opposed by much right principle and feeling. Notwithstanding the corruption of the times, many of the clergy were married, and had families. They would, therefore, regard with great abhorrence any proceedings which were calculated either to drive them from their sacred profession, or to separate them from those who were dearer to them than life. Since such feelings and principles had the clear warrant of holy Scripture, we cannot be surprised that the married clergy united to resist the threatened oppression.

This opposition was called into resolute action by circumstances which soon afterwards took place. On the death of Edred, Edwy, his nephew, succeeded to the throne at the age of sixteen. He was married to his cousin Elgiva. This affair appears to have been conducted so precipitately, that it was afterward discovered that she was related to him in what the Romish church is pleased to call "a prohibited degree;" and therefore the popish writers frequently represent her as his concubine. Her well-known story is one of the most deeply tragic tales in British history. On the coronation day the young king after dinner rose from the table; and, leaving his guests over their cups, went into an inner apartment to his wife and her mother. Such an act of disrespect might have been excused in one so young; especially when, through the prevalence of Danish manners, gross drinking had become common even at episcopal tables. This conduct of the king, however, gave great offence; and Odo, the archbishop, desired that some persons would go and bring the king back to his guests.

The nobles excused themselves from being employed on this rude errand. But Dunstan and his relation, the bishop Cynerias, consented to go, and fetch the king. They accordingly proceeded to his private apartment; and, forgetting what was due to the sovereign and to all the sanctities of conjugal affection, they poured out a violent invective against the ladies, and forcibly dragged Edwy back to the company of his nobility.

But the proud monk had mistaken the mind which he had attempted to subdue. The king displayed such a spirit of independence and generous feeling as became a man and a sovereign. He deprived Dunstan of his honours and wealth, and condemned him to banishment. Dunstan fled before the storm. So severe was the royal indignation, that the monk was scarcely three miles from the shore on his voyage to Flanders, when messengers reached it, who, it is said, would have deprived him of sight, if found in the country. It was, perhaps, politically inexpedient for Edwy to have acted under the powerful impulse of his angry passions in

this affair. Dunstan was not a mere monk of Glastonbury. His cause was superstitiously regarded as the cause of the church ; and the arm of justice, in dealing with his proud violence, had to strike through all those prejudices with which the public mind had been imbued, and to oppose the well-organized and compact phalanx which the various grades of the clerical order and the Benedictines at this time presented. This powerful party was also supported by the friendship of Turketal, the venerable chancellor, and by the great influence of Odo, the primate ; and, more than all, they were not controlled by any pure and holy principles, which would keep them within the limits of equity and honour. Ample proof of this appears in the events which immediately followed.

Odo soon after divorced the king from his wife, on the plea of their relationship ; and so powerful was his party, and so daring the pride of the prelate, that a band of soldiers were sent to the palace, who seized the queen, branded her face with a hot iron, for the double purpose of destroying her beauty and marking her with infamy, and transported her to Ireland. The perpetrators of this diabolical act, being less inhuman than their employers, performed their orders so imperfectly, that when the wounds were healed, no deformity remained ; and Elgiva, escaping from banishment, returned to England, to rejoin her husband. She was pursued and overtaken at Gloucester by the minions of the archbishop, who, with an infernal cruelty, worthy the worst days of the Inquisition, divided the nerves and muscles of her legs to prevent a second escape. Yet the monsters who perpetrated this accursed deed are called "the servants of God" by the monkish biographer ! But extreme cruelty could not long retain its victim. Her sufferings at last terminated. "Death released her from her murderers, whom no beauty could interest, no sympathy assuage."

On the banishment of Dunstan, an eye-witness relates, that when the king's officers were making an inventory of his goods at Glastonbury, the devil was heard laughing and rejoicing ; and that the saint, who knew his voice, told him

not to exult too much, for, upon a change of affairs, he would be as much cast down. From this it will be seen that Dunstan had not forgotten his art, nor did the most perilous circumstances prevent him from turning it to the advantage of his party.

Not satisfied with the banishment and murder of the queen, Odo gave his sanction to a revolt of the Northumbrians and Mercians, who set up Edgar, a boy of thirteen, in opposition to Edwy, and compelled the latter to retire to the country south of the Thames. While the power of the legitimate monarch was thus limited by rebellion, Dunstan returned in triumph, and was promoted to the see of Worcester. A circumstance took place in connexion with his consecration, which shows with what freedom (not to say, profaneness) the most sacred things were treated for political purposes by the clergy of that age. When Odo performed the ceremony, he consecrated him archbishop of Canterbury, instead of bishop of Worcester; and when one of the bystanders, who was not in the secret, replied that it was against the canons to have two archbishops, and that he had no authority thus to elect his own successor, the primate audaciously said, that what he had done was not his own act, but that he had spoken under the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost, Dunstan being destined to succeed him in the primacy as the most redoubted champion against the prince of this world.

“There seemed sufficient likelihood to believe that this impudent prediction would bring about its fulfilment, the obvious purpose for which it was intended. Edwy, after struggling three years against the competitor whom these ambitious churchmen had set up, was removed from the contest by a violent death. Nor was it enough for his flagitious enemies to have deprived him of his wife, driven him from his throne, and brought both these illustrious victims to an untimely and miserable end. Still further to blacken the memory of this most injured prince, they affirmed that Dunstan had seen a host of devils rejoicing over his soul as their allotted prey, and that the saint, by his intercession,

had rescued him from that everlasting damnation to which he must otherwise have been condemned."*

Odo died before Edwy; and, harassed and persecuted as the latter had been, he retained sufficient firmness, and the secular clergy enough influence, to prevent Dunstan from being appointed primate. Elfin, bishop of Winchester, was raised to this dignity; but he died on his journey to Rome for the pall. Again Dunstan was disappointed. Byrthelm, bishop of Dorchester, was made archbishop. But on the death of Edwy, soon after, the friends who had raised him to the primacy could not support him there; and, the monks clamouring for his removal, he was sent back to his diocese, and Dunstan at length was placed at the head of the English church.

As might have been expected, the elevation of the new archbishop was accompanied by miracles. "While he was performing his first mass, a dove alighted upon him, and remained during the whole ceremony. In those days the impious assertion was safely made, that this was the same dove which had appeared when our Saviour was baptized in the river Jordan. He said also of himself, that, whether sleeping or waking, his spirit was always intent upon spiritual things. He affirmed that he saw his own mother solemnly espoused to the King of heaven, that all the choirs of angels joined in hymns of joy, and that an angel had taught him an anthem upon the occasion; and he made one of his clerks write down this anthem, and had it performed in his church as a divine composition. The dream was said to be symbolical, and the mother of Dunstan to typify the church as by him reformed. So long as Edgar lived, such easy frauds were sufficient for their purpose. That king was wholly in the hands of the monastic party; they engaged to defend him from the devil and his angels, and he bound himself to protect them against their earthly opponents. On his part the contract was faithfully performed; the clergy were driven out, and the Benedictines established every where in their stead."†

* SOUTHEY'S "Book of the Church," p. 63.

† *Ibid.*, p. 64.

Notwithstanding the success of these efforts of the kingly and priestly power, the public mind was not quite prepared for the degradation of the married clergy. The rights of humanity still had a voice, and the people heard and felt that it was not necessary for every spiritual office to be filled by men leagued and banded together by monastic vows; who, while they professed to renounce the world, and to make the church their choice, were literally putting forth every energy they possessed to subdue the world to their power and pride, and whose efforts and influence were rapidly making the church "earthly, sensual, devilish."

The death of Edgar afforded a fit opportunity for the manifestation of the favour which the populace bore towards the secular clergy. The widowed queen took part with them, and they were restored by force in several parts of the kingdom, but were soon after as violently ejected by Dunstan, who had obtained possession of the young king, Edward. The quarrel became vehement. The governor of Mercia turned out all the monks; the governor of East Anglia supported them. Tumult and confusion ensued.

The archbishop perceived that force alone was not to be relied on: a synod was called at Winchester. When the secular clergy appealed to the king, entreating that they might be restored to their rightful possessions, and while the anxious assembly waited for a reply, a voice proceeded from a crucifix against the wall, saying, "Let it not be! let it not be! You have done well, and would do ill to change it." "What wish ye more?" exclaimed Dunstan immediately; "the divine voice determines the affair." This artifice did not satisfy the complaining party. A second council was called, and separated without effecting anything. Measures were taken to render the third decisive. It was held at Calne. The nobles, as well as the heads of both parties, attended. The king was kept away because of his youth, although he had been present at the preceding meetings. Beornelm, a Scotch bishop, pleaded the cause of the clergy with great ability, alleging Scripture and custom in their behalf, and arguing upon the morality and reason of

the case, against the celibacy to which, by these new laws, the ecclesiastics were to be compelled. His speech produced considerable effect, and the archbishop did not attempt to answer it. The latter "laid aside," observes his biographer, "all means excepting prayer, and simply said, 'You endeavour to overcome me who am growing old, and disposed to silence rather than contention. I confess that I am unwilling to be overcome; and I commit the cause of His church to Christ Himself, as Judge!'" As these words, which lead the mind to the most unfavourable inferences, were uttered, the floor and its beams and rafters gave way, and the clergy, with the nobles, their friends, fell with the ruins to the earth below. Many were killed, and others grievously hurt; but that portion of the floor on which Dunstan and his party had taken their seats remained firm.

The arch miracle-monger lived ten years to enjoy his victory, and to carry into effect his proposed alterations in the church. This was done in a manner and spirit that perfectly harmonized with his preceding character. On the death of his pupil Athelwold, the see of Winchester became vacant. As, from the avowed dissatisfaction of the nobles, Dunstan's power was insecure, it became expedient that he should guard it by filling up every office with his friends. He fixed upon Elphegus as the successor; and, to abolish all competition, he boldly declared that St. Andrew had appeared to him, and commanded him to consecrate Elphegus to the vacant see.*

"The end of this monkish prelate was worthy of his life; for, during those juggling ages, when the chief performers in the Romish church were no longer able or willing to act wonders for themselves, ready instruments were always at hand to carry on the system of deceit to the last. When his death was approaching, a priest, who, on the eve of Ascension Day, had been keeping vigils in the church, declared he had seen Dunstan seated on his archiepiscopal throne, and dictating laws to the clergy; when, behold, a

* TURNER'S "History of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. ii., p. 275.

multitude of cherubim and seraphim entered at all the doors, attired in glittering white garments, and wearing crowns of gold. 'And here,' says a Benedictine historian, 'the greatness of his sanctity must be observed: they were not only angels who came to escort him, but those only of the highest orders of the hierarchy of heaven, even cherubim and seraphim themselves.' They arranged themselves in order before the saint, and addressed him, saying, 'Hail, our Dunstan! If thou art ready, come and enter into our fellowship!' But the saint made answer, 'Holy spirits, ye know that upon this day Christ ascended into heaven; it is my duty to refresh the people of God both with words and with the sacrament at this time; and, therefore, I cannot come to-day.' In condescension to his wishes, a further respite than he required was granted, and they promised to return for him on the Saturday.

"Accordingly, on Ascension Day, Dunstan officiated for the last time. He preached upon the mysteries of religion, as he had never preached before, such was the fervour with which the near prospect of his glorification inspired him; and when he gave the people his blessing, his countenance became like that of an angel, and was suffused with a splendour, wherein it was apparent that the Holy Spirit was pleased to make its presence visible. He then exhorted them to remember him and his exhortations; for the time of his departure was at hand, and he must no longer abide among them. At this, such lamentations were set up as if the world were at an end, and the day of judgment had begun; and the priest, who hitherto had doubted whether what he had beheld during the night were a vision or an actual appearance, knew now that it was real, and with tears and groans related before the congregation all that he had seen and heard. The saint, after taking his last meal, re-entered the church, and fixed upon the spot for his grave. He then went to his bed; and as he lay there, surrounded by his monks, he and the bed whereon he was lying were thrice, by some unseen power, elevated from the floor to the ceiling, and gently lowered again; while the

attendants, as if terrified at the prodigy, and believing that their saint, like Elijah, was to be translated in the body, started from the bed-side, and clung to the walls and door-posts.

“Saturday came, and the cherubim and seraphim, according to their promise, descended to escort him. They were not, indeed, visible to others, but he saw them; and as the monks knew this, the people believed it. ‘See,’ says one of his biographers, ‘how *he* hath been honoured, whom God thought worthy of honour! See in what manner *he* hath entered into the joy of his Lord, who was found faithful over the talents of doctrine committed to his charge!’ The multitude, as they attended his funeral, beat themselves with open hands, and lacerated their faces,—a ceremony of Heathen mourning which had not been abrogated; and the saint was deposited in the cathedral over which he had presided, there to work miracles and attract pilgrims and devotees to his shrine.” *

The life and actions of Dunstan are thus given at length, because they show, much more clearly than any mere summary of unconnected public occurrences could do, the true character of the English church at this time, the spirit in which it was governed, and the practical effect which these were calculated to produce on the people at large. There is another reason for this selection: these events are well-attested. They are supported by clearer evidence than almost any other part of the history of those times. Dr. Southey says of this narrative, that “it rests upon such testimony, that the Romanists can neither by any subtilty rid themselves of the facts, nor escape from the inevitable inference. The most atrocious parts are matter of authentic history; others, which, though less notorious, authenticate themselves by their consistency, are related by a contemporary monk, who declares that he had witnessed what he records, and heard the rest from the disciples of the saint. Whether, therefore, those miracles were actually performed by the monks, or only averred by them as having been wrought,

* SOUTHEY’S “Book of the Church,” p. 67.

either in their own sight, or that of their predecessors, there is the same fraudulent purpose, the same audacity of imposture ; and they remain irrefragable proofs of that system of deceit which the Roman church carried on everywhere till the time of the Reformation, and still pursues wherever it retains its temporal power or its influence." *

In exhibiting this combination of ecclesiastical tyranny, profanity, falsehood, and pseudo-miracles, as characterizing the Anglo-Saxon church at this time, we must not overlook the fact, that many of the nobility had sufficient discernment to perceive the unsound principles of this policy, and sufficient spirit to resist its operation. Yet it is clear that the country was so fully imbued with monkish influence, and that the various orders of regular ecclesiastics were so united together, that all this resistance was unavailing. Not only was the public mind enslaved, and bound in the chains of superstition ; but those nobles and kings who dared to resist the impudent encroachments of priestly power, fell victims to their temerity, and sank into degradation, or were doomed to death.

Although the Saxon kingdoms had gradually and completely fallen into ecclesiastical bondage, the remains of the ancient British churches struggled zealously and perseveringly against this unrighteous domination. In the time of Bede, the Britons persisted in refusing conformity to the clerical tonsure, and the Romish time of observing Easter ; and when, about twenty-five years after his death, Elvod, or Elbodius, who was appointed bishop of Bangor, and primate of North Wales, laboured to bring the Britons to act in conformity with the Romish customs, the other British bishops opposed the innovation. Then the Saxons, in the true spirit of the papacy, marched an army into Wales, for the purpose of supporting the archbishop : the Cambro-Britons, however, met this irruption with spirit, and obtained a complete victory over the invaders at Cord Marchan, in the vale of Clwyd.

But the design of subduing this ancient church to the

* SOUTHEY'S "Book of the Church," p. 68.

dominion of Rome was not so soon to be relinquished. A few years afterwards, (A.D. 777,) the prince of South Wales, to avoid a similar invasion, sanctioned with his authority the introduction of certain Romish observances. But this attempt so irritated the popular feeling, that he was slain in a tumult. These persevering attacks, however, were ultimately to a certain extent successful. Many were found who preferred a partial submission to foreign authority, and even the observance of certain unmeaning rites, to slaughter and bloodshed.*

Still the Britons, as a people, adhered to their ancient faith and practice. A stanza of Taliessin, of which the following is given as a translation, although written soon after the coming of Augustine, was long cherished in the recollection of the public, as embodying the religious feeling of the Britons :—

“ Woe be to that priest yborn
That will not cleanly weed his corn,
And preach his charge among :
Woe be to that shepherd, I say,
That will not watch his fold alway,
As to his office doth belong :
Woe be to him that doth not keep
From Romish wolves his sheep
With staff and weapon strong.”

We further find, in the Greek biographers of Chrysostom, that some clergymen who dwelt in the isles of the ocean, repaired from the utmost borders of the habitable world to Constantinople, to inquire concerning “ certain ecclesiastical traditions, and the perfect and exact computation of Easter.”† This is said to have taken place during the patriarchate of Methodius, which extended from A.D. 842 to 847. If this deputation was sent by the Britons or ancient Irish, which can scarcely be doubted, it shows that while this people resisted Romish aggression, they were equally zealous in endeavouring to come to a knowledge of the truth. Another instance of this resistance is supplied by

* “Blackwood’s Magazine,” vol. xxv., p. 339.

† USHER’S Works, vol. iv., p. 356.

Camden, who, in giving an account of the foundation of the bishopric of Bodmin, says, "About the year of our Lord 905, Edward the Elder, by a decree from pope Formosus, settled a bishop's see here, and granted the bishop of Kirton three villages in those parts,—Polton, Cæling, and Lanwitham, that he might every year visit the county of Cornwall, in order to reform their errors ; for, before that, they resisted the truth to the utmost of their power, and would not submit to the apostolical decrees." *

Thus, to whatever part of the island the ancient British Christians retired, there they cherished their disrelish for Romish innovation. But when all the Saxon nations were united under one sovereign, and his mind and means were placed at the disposal of priests and monks, the great apostasy spread its baneful influence to all parts of the country, and error and superstition everywhere prevailed.

* "Britannia," p. 9. Fol. London, 1695.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

IN the preceding pages we have placed before the reader, as fully as our means and limits would allow, the religious condition of the successive races of men who occupied this island from the earliest ages until the complete establishment of Popery. We have investigated their several religious systems, not merely in regard to doctrines, rites, and priestly establishments, but also as to the power which they exercised upon the public mind, and the manner in which they affected the conduct, character, and experience of the various individuals who were subjected to their operation. We have endeavoured to do this under the influence of the great fact, that each individual man stands in an important relation to the great Author of his existence; that his destiny is linked to everlasting ages; and that, therefore, religion is not to be regarded merely as an engine devised for the use of the politician, or as a field of inquiry calling forth the researches of philosophy, or as a place of conflict for the battles of polemical divinity, but rather as a wonderful plan of mercy devised by God for the instruction, elevation, comfort, and happiness of the soul.

With respect to religion, regarded in this important aspect, two things are self-evident:—First. *It must be founded in truth.* Here is no room for speculation and hypothesis, no place for the principles of expediency. The actual state and condition of man, the reality of the divine attributes and character, and a faithful display of the divine purposes and of man's duty, must ever be the foundation. Secondly. *This truth can proceed only from divine revelation.* The great subjects to which it refers lie beyond the grasp of the human intellect; their source is too deep for the penetration of human sagacity. Man must be taught

of God, or he can never fully know himself, or properly apprehend the purposes of divine grace.

In speaking of this revealed truth, we may observe that we mainly refer to those revelations of His will which God of set purpose has given to mankind for their instruction and guidance. But while we thus build our faith entirely on Scripture verity, we are prepared, to the fullest extent, to recognise the teaching and influences of the Holy Spirit. There is "a light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world," and this light shone on the hearts and consciences of men in dark ages as well as in Gospel days; and while priestly craft and low and earthly policy disgraced the history of religion, we may hope that many, under the living influence of this divine teaching, were "a law unto themselves," and by obedience to it obtained eternal life.

Governed by these views, the preceding pages have been written. But the multitudinous circumstances and facts related rendered it generally inexpedient to introduce these observations which to a Christian mind they were so abundantly calculated to suggest. Nor can we now hope to supply this deficiency. Our limits forbid the attempt. Yet some few practical observations on various branches of the subject, appear to be required, and may not be unwelcome to the serious reader.

What has been already said of the ancient Britons, will be sufficient to connect them with the primitive family of mankind. Whatever doubt may exist as to some of the features of the case, enough appears, from the general scope of the facts and traditions to which we have referred, to establish the truth, as far as the aborigines of our own country are concerned, and thence to render extremely probable the universal application of the saying, that "God has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." More than this: the history and religion of this ancient people connect them with the revelation of divine truth. Not only are they found to have had practices, opinions, and traditions, in

common with those of various far-distant and widely-separated tribes, which clearly attest an identity of origin; they are also found to have possessed fragments of ancient history, religious doctrines and rites, so strikingly similar to those recorded in Holy Scripture, that there is no danger of their being attributed to any other than that inspired source.

In respect to history, the Druidical traditions relating to the Deluge are in point; and their religious doctrines regarding the character and attributes of God, His government and providence, worship, sacrifice, and prayer, are equally decisive. Beyond the possibility of doubt these show that the earliest occupiers of this island possessed a large amount of traditional knowledge, derived through their progenitors from Almighty God. We might refer to sacrifice as a remarkable instance. No reason drawn from the nature of this rite, or the natural circumstances of men, can be given for its prevalence. Contrariwise it stood opposed to the present interests of man: yet it was submitted to as a positive institute. Apart from the acknowledgment of divine appointment, this involves us in inextricable embarrassment; nor have the mightiest minds done anything towards affording a reasonable solution of these difficulties.* A recognition of its divine appointment is therefore, not only the best, but the only rational, principle on which we can account for the existence and prevalence of animal sacrifice. And this principle not only gives consistency and harmony to the several religious opinions to which we have referred, as entertained by the primitive inhabitants of this country; it at the same time connects this people and their opinions with the great doctrine of atonement which is revealed in holy Scripture, and with all the divine economy which arises out of its infinite and availing efficacy.

* "We are told that Pythagoras and Plato, so far from being able to account for the origin of animal sacrifice on any plausibly rational grounds, expressed their amazement how the dismal, though universal, custom of defiling all places with the blood of brute beasts could ever, in the first instance, have been excogitated."—JAMBlichus *De Vita Pythag.* See other proofs collected in FABER'S "Origin of Sacrifice," pp. 24, 25.

How cheering is this view, in contrast with that generally exhibited of the religious condition of the ancient Britons! We see them here in possession of the great elements of religious truth, holding doctrines which God had revealed to the earliest inhabitants of the world, and, although separated by continents and seas, worshipping on the hills and beneath the oaks of Britain the same Jehovah in the same manner as that in which Abraham, Isaac, and other Old-Testament saints adored him. We have here reason for believing that the first occupiers of the island brought with them at least some knowledge of God's covenant mercy to mankind. They had heard of something which was to be the cure of all ills; and although clouds and darkness might have gathered about the object of their faith, until at length, by looking at symbols, they lost sight of the substance, yet we must not forget that, even in those circumstances, obedience to divine influence and sincere prayer were able to give them access unto God, and make them partakers of His grace.

We are, however, compelled to admit the existence of facts which go to prove, that, in after-ages, there was a woful departure from the purest principles of this faith. The natural depravity of the human mind was the great cause of this; although commercial intercourse with other and more idolatrous nations might have considerably aggravated the evil.

A broad, just, and spiritual inquiry into the design of God, in the gradual development of the mediatorial scheme of mercy to the successive ages of mankind, through the medium of the several dispensations of grace, would cast some important light on this subject. This we cannot furnish. Yet we may venture to suppose that it was one branch of this design, to show the true character of man, to bring out, in all its accumulation of evil, the terrible results of the fall, that man might see and feel his need of a Saviour, and that this Redeemer, and the redemption which He procured, might be justly magnified. Hence, we find in the first ages certain great truths communicated by God to man,

which were transmitted orally to succeeding generations. Then, as these truths became obliterated, and idolatry everywhere prevailed, a particular family was selected to stand in a peculiar relation to Jehovah. Of them the Lord made a great nation, and to them He gave, in addition to many other covenant mercies, written oracles ; which contained a rich revelation of the divine will. Yet even this failed to counteract the influence of prevailing error, and to spread a knowledge of God through the world.

At length, in the fulness of time, God sent His own Son, with all the blessings of His holy Gospel. Here was not only a perfect sacrifice, and an uniform offer of grace to all languages, and peoples, and tongues ; but, as one important part of this “better covenant,” we have a canon of revealed truth, perfect and complete.

The first dispensation, therefore, was a dispensation of tradition. This appears to have been its peculiar and distinctive character. In many other respects it resembled those which followed ; it taught the same doctrines, prescribed the same rites, and communicated similar truths. But in its mode of instruction it was peculiar ; this was effected by tradition. We can easily conceive human nature in a condition which, although imperfect, might, by the use of such means, have been saved from further degeneracy, and have been brought generally to participate in the divine goodness and mercy. The event, however, proved that such was not the actual state of mankind. For although a rich amount of religious truth must have been revealed in a clear and authoritative manner to the first human inhabitants of our earth, so completely fallen is our nature, that this truth in its transmission became connected with the pride, policy, passion, and depravity of man ; until the whole range of what was called “religion” was vitiated, sacrifice sunk into murder, and worship was associated with pollution.

In this universal degeneracy, our country appears to have sunk as slowly as any nation, and, on the whole, (perhaps owing to its insular situation,) retained more sparkling frag-

ments of divine truth in doctrine, and much more of sterling morality in practice, than any other country of that age with which we are acquainted. Yet it must be confessed, that this favourable comparison affords but slender reason for gratulation. It is not because the ancient Britons stood high, either in religion or morals, but because other nations had sunk awfully low, that the advantage seems to be on the side of our ancestors.

Still, some writers, differing altogether from our views, have supposed, that the deterioration of the British religion and morality resulted, not from moral causes, but from the peculiar situation of Britain, and the very partial acquaintance which its inhabitants in the early ages must have had with the cultivation, discoveries, and science of more favoured nations. If there was any danger of this opinion obtaining credit, it pleased Divine Providence to permit a course of afflictive events to take place, which furnished the most ample confutation of it. After a series of invasions and sanguinary conflicts, which have scarcely a parallel in any other age or country, Rome triumphed over all opposition, and this island became a province of that overgrown empire. By submitting to the arms and government of Rome, Britain derived many advantages from the united influence of the arts and elegance, the learning and religion, of its conqueror.

Let it be remembered, that this took place in the Augustan age, when the imperial city had made all the treasures of Egyptian and Grecian learning her own; when the concentrated intellect of Plato and Cicero had shed light upon her literature; when her citizens had been charmed by the elegant numbers of Virgil, and the delicate satire of Horace; when all that wit and wisdom, genius and learning, could possibly effect, had been done for Rome; and (for this is a material point) when all this cultivation had for some time been controlling and influencing the national faith. At this period the religion of Rome was introduced into Britain. The preceding pages show the utter inefficiency of this entire scheme of theology and morals. Never could there be given a more ample proof that the "wisdom of this

world is foolishness with God." Instead of elevating human nature, it taught the most debasing views of Deity. While the public mind required the manifestation of high and holy principles as a rule of life and model of conduct, the national faith exhibited, elevated, and attempted to sanctify, the foulest passions, the most sensual ideas, and the most licentious practices. Instead of raising humanity to any just acquaintance with God, it degraded Divinity to the weakness and wickedness of man.

But the means which led to the introduction of the Roman mythology into this country, also served, under the direction of Divine Providence, to promote another and very important purpose. During the time occupied by the various invasions of Britain, the blessed Redeemer of man lived, died, and ascended into glory. His apostles, having received a commission to preach the Gospel to every creature, went in the fulness of the Holy Ghost to all parts, disseminating the knowledge of God and His salvation. It is highly probable that the subjection of Britain to Rome led to the early introduction of the Gospel into this country. The circumstances which associate the apostle of the Gentiles with the evangelization of this island, are deeply interesting; and, although not fully amounting to proof, yet, when taken in their united and concurring weight of evidence, they render it extremely probable that this holy man, before he had "finished his course," not only ministered in Spain, but also on these shores preached "Christ crucified, the wisdom of God, and the power of God."

However this may be, it is morally certain, that the notoriety which passing events at this period gave to British affairs at Rome, and the facilities of intercourse which arose from the existence of the Roman government here, hastened the promulgation of the Gospel to the inhabitants of this country.

And, O, how delightful is it to contemplate this transition from the darkness of nature to the light of grace! We see the ancient inhabitants of this island, although originally favoured with considerable religious light, gradually neglect-

ing and corrupting it, until they to a great extent adopted the Pagan superstitions of their Roman conquerors, and "sat down in darkness." In this deplorable condition the Lord visited and redeemed His people. Meditating on such a subject, we can scarcely avoid regretting that the language, literature, and history of the human family should so largely exhibit our vices and sorrows, but should speak so little concerning true virtue and real happiness; that they should so entirely relate to our connexion with earth, and so completely overlook our interest in heaven! Yet so it is. In the records of history, the most depraved spirit can be satiated with details of crime. Battles and bloodshed are scattered with disagreeable profusion over its pages. Folly and vice are portrayed, until the mind sickens and turns away in disgust. But how little is said of the triumphs of the Cross, of the progress and influence of vital godliness! What event ever occurred on this island, since it has had a name, of more deep or rational interest to its inhabitants in all ages, than the conversion of the first soul to God which took place on these shores? Yet the history of that momentous change, with all its circumstances, has sunk into oblivion:—the penitential struggle, the exercise of faith in the death of Christ, the consequent joy and peace in believing, the happy intercourse with God, and the glorious hope of immortal life; the remembrance of all these is perished from the earth. Yet surely it shall not be always so. There is a day approaching, when the blazoned deeds of princes and warriors shall sink into forgetfulness; and when the records of God's truth, and the memorials of His faithful servants, shall be written, as with a sunbeam, for the meditation of redeemed spirits throughout eternal ages.

Although those happy events are not recorded in the pages of history, they undoubtedly took place. The Gospel was preached, the Holy Spirit attested its truth, sinners were convinced of their danger, and were by faith translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. A company of believing souls were united together; and, although opposed by powerful obstacles, the word of truth proceeded from

conquering to conquer. Hell was roused ; persecution, arrayed in awful terrors, stalked forth ; blood was shed. At length Jehovah rebuked the destroyer, and the tempest passed away. But the malice of the enemy remained ; and what force could not effect, subtilty and fraud were employed to accomplish.

Arianism and Pelagianism spread their poison through the churches. Arising from different agencies, these twin evils exercised a kindred influence. The one robbed Christ of His glory ; the other affected to raise fallen man to an absurd, unnatural, and deceitful elevation. If one was true, the other was probable. If man scarcely needed a Saviour, an inferior arm might have saved him. But both were false ; both were awful perversions of divine mercy, and dreadful denials of divine truth. After these errors had exercised an unhappy influence for a season, the sanctified intellect of the British church, assisted by eminent French prelates, frowned them down into their native darkness and obscurity. Yet there is reason to fear, that the means adopted to make this victory certain, ultimately tended to the injury of British Christianity.

Even at this early period, the continental churches had adopted rites and ceremonies, which, although few and unimportant in themselves, rather encumbered than promoted the progress of Gospel truth. By the visit of Germanus and his companions, these were introduced into Britain. Nevertheless, the power and spirit of religion were felt and enjoyed, and its influence gradually extended to the remotest parts of the island. Even while this was being effected, great numbers, who professed to have abandoned Heathenism, and to have embraced the Gospel, were unfaithful to their high calling. Having a name to live, they gave up their minds so fully to earthly cares, pursuits, and enjoyments, that they remained strangers to the vital influence of genuine Christianity. Formality and hypocritical profession prevailed. The great men of the land, and even the ministers of the Gospel, caught the prevailing contagion. The spiritual condition of the church, and the circumstances

by which it was surrounded, seemed to iterate, with the authority of a voice from heaven: "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." (Rev. ii. 5.) Faithful and zealous ministers urged this sound advice with impassioned ardour; but still true religion declined, and ultimately the fearful consequences were felt.

The Roman empire, which had been permitted to extend its sway over the principal parts of the world, had now sunk from the zenith of its greatness, and was tottering to its fall. By subjecting so many and far distant nations to one central government, this mighty dominion had raised an extended platform on which took place the greatest displays of providence and grace that this earth ever witnessed. Having subserved those purposes, the immense fabric, before which an astonished world had trembled, gradually sunk into ruinous decay. This was not the result of accident. In less than two hundred years after the building of Rome, while its government was confined to a small part of Italy, and its existence, perhaps, utterly unknown in Asia, a prophet of God, residing in Persia, under the plenary inspiration of the Holy Ghost, had described, with graphic accuracy, the iron strength, subduing power, and widely extended success of the Roman arms; and at the same time, with equal precision, had portrayed the weakness of this power as arising from want of union between the discordant elements of which the empire was composed,—a cause which the prophet exhibits as leading ultimately to entire disorganization and ruin. (Dan. ii. 40–44.) Such was the event; and this result greatly affected the British church. When imperial Rome was herself threatened with impending dangers, and her government withdrew the legions from this island, the disunited inhabitants were not only harassed by the numerous jealousies and discords that arose out of their several local views and interests, but they were also ravaged by successive incursions from the barbarous and fierce Scots and Picts. The want and wretchedness which

resulted from this state of things must have been great ; the effect produced on the interests of religion was fearful ; and both together would have presented to the mind a striking proof that God had entered into judgment with His people.

But Britain was destined to endure more than this. The arrival, progress, and ultimate ascendancy of the Saxons present to the patriotic and Christian mind one of the most terrible evils that ever afflicted any nation. Falling, after a vigorous resistance, before the martial power of successive Saxon armies, the Britons were either driven from the largest and best portion of the country, or reduced to slavery. The conquerors brought with them and maintained a scheme of Heathen doctrines and worship, which thus triumphed over the truth of God, and put to shame the faith of His people. With what feelings would a British Christian witness a Saxon chief measuring out and appropriating the fields and possessions which had belonged to himself and to his sires, while he and his children were doomed as slaves to cultivate, for the use of his usurping lord, this very land ? Still, how much greater would be the pain, how much more intense the mental anguish, to behold the brutal orgies of Woden and Thor celebrated where God had been known, where the Gospel of Christ had been preached and believed, and where now the enslaved professors of this holy faith could only worship in solitude and by stealth, or by the contemptuous sufferance of proud and ignorant idolaters ! Although religion had declined, and there had been a general departure from the practice and experience of vital godliness, we can scarcely imagine but that very many, brought back to God by the pressure of affliction, would dare to suffer under this terrible amount of evil, rather than renounce the faith which they had formerly received.

But the more important part of the population appear to have shrunk from this state of vassalage, as an evil worse than death. They abandoned their homes ; and, fleeing before the power which they could not resist, retired to the western parts of the island, thus creating a great increase of

population in some parts of Scotland, Wales, and the south-west peninsula of England, particularly in the counties of Somersetshire, Devonshire, and Cornwall. Here they not only maintained their independence, but with increasing earnestness clung to the faith of the Gospel. A careful investigation of the history of this period clearly shows, that while the Saxon kingdoms were consolidating their power, and spreading the influence of Heathenism with the progress of their arms, God was pleased to give a mighty impulse to pure religion in the British church. Ireland, Cornwall, Wales, and West Scotland, exhibit ample proofs of the prevalence and power of vital Christianity.

It would be delightful to pursue our inquiries into this subject, and to elicit a knowledge of the extent to which the population was instructed, and imbued with the spirit of the Gospel; but the *data* which alone can resolve those questions have long since passed away. Enough, happily, remains to attest the early existence of vital Christianity, and to prove that among this people, under its benign influence, many persons of great rank, intelligence, and property, consecrated themselves to the service of God, and were made honoured instruments in promoting and extending the knowledge of His salvation.

While the religion of Christ was thus acquiring increasing spiritual energy, and exhibiting repeated evidences of its vitality and power, in the western coasts of Britain; in the eastern part of the world, the Christian cause was brought under the influence of error and superstition, by means so specious and effective, that its whole character was placed in peril: and thus ultimately an entire change was imparted to a large portion of the Christian world.

A complete and critical investigation of the origin and progress of those errors, conducted on principles truly scriptural and thoroughly evangelical, is still a *desideratum* in Christian literature. The sectarian partialities and prejudices of many otherwise competent writers have prevented them from extending their inquiries into a region of research which would place in jeopardy the favourite features of

their several creeds. In the present rapid review of the progress of Christianity, we make no pretensions to supply this want. Yet it may be necessary to refer to some principles, and to furnish some information, tending to promote a sound view of this important subject.

We have ventured to designate the revelation made by God in the patriarchal age "a dispensation of tradition." We have also shown that, by this mode of transmission, the intention of Divine Mercy was not accomplished; and that although the various mythological systems of the ancient world contained evident fragments of primeval truth, these were buried, and rendered practically inoperative, on account of the immense accumulation of poetry, speculation, and fable, which had been gathered around them by the perverted genius and fancy of human nature.

When it pleased the Almighty to call the Israelitish people into special covenant-relation with Himself, He gave them, through the instrumentality of Moses, a written revelation of His own will. This was a medium of communication which was calculated to keep the truth of God prominently before the minds of the Hebrews, and to preserve it from adulteration. At first, the economy which this prescribed was highly ceremonial, typical, and figurative. This, however, was afterward, to a very considerable extent, explained, and its spiritual meaning and intent were clearly exhibited in successive revelations, given through inspired prophets, which were also committed to writing, and which, together with the writings of Moses, made a body of sacred oracles, calculated and designed to unfold the divine purposes, and to display the great scheme of redemption through the suffering of the promised Messiah.

Although these writings were for many ages regarded as an inestimable treasure, yet when the precious promises they contained were carried into accomplishment, and, contrary to the vain-glorious desires and carnal expectation of the Jewish people, redemption was proclaimed unto Israel through the vicarious sufferings of a crucified Saviour, then, after struggling for a long time against the weight of evi-

dence which stood opposed to their unbelief, the Jewish elders adopted a way of escape, as profane as it was ingenious. They taught, that certain revelations were made to Moses during his stay in the holy mount, and that these were transmitted from him, through Aaron, Eleazar, and Joshua, to the prophets, and by them to the men of the Great Sanhedrim, from whom they passed in succession to Simeon, who took our Saviour in his arms, Gamaliel, and ultimately to Rabbi Jehuda, surnamed Hakkodosh, or "the Holy," by whom they were committed to writing about the latter part of the second century.*

The main object aimed at in the preservation and study of these traditions, appears to have been, to obtain a religious standard more explicit in its teaching, and more authoritative in its character, than the written law. Hence, "the Mishna," (this collection of traditions,) and the commentaries upon it, which were called "the Gemaras," were esteemed as of the highest possible character and perfection. These were subsequently used in the interpretation of Scripture, which was henceforth to be explained according to the tenor of those traditions.

Thus, when the purity and spirituality of God's gracious purpose toward mankind were brought into accomplishment, the Jewish people not only rejected the latter and perfect dispensation of grace, but, to make this rejection plausible, they relinquished the greatest glory of their own peculiar economy, (Rom. iii. 2,) and fell back upon the manifest imperfection of the initial dispensation; claiming, as the source of *their* light and strength, the obvious cause of *its* gloom and weakness. Against this course of proceeding, even before it had been fully carried into operation, our Saviour Himself, with all His divine authority, earnestly protested: "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." (Matt. xv. 3, 6.) Here our blessed Redeemer clearly points out the obvious result of this unwise and unholy conduct. If

* HORNE'S "Introduction to the Study of the Bible," vol. ii., p. 417.

traditional maxims and precepts—which are almost sure to be corrupted in the course of oral transmission, and to partake more or less of the infirmities of human memory and human judgment—are to be made the standard of Scripture truth and interpretation; then unquestionably the greater is made to bow in obedience to the less; and the commandment of God, which was written at first even by the finger of Jehovah, that it might bear a perpetual and unalterable testimony to His truth, is made of none effect. We will not attempt to detail the melancholy results. This ancient people of the Most High, fallen from their covenant condition, scattered over the whole earth, everywhere afford an awful example of the danger which results from disobedience to the pure precepts and promises of the word of God.

With such an example before their eyes, we might have supposed that the churches of Christ would have carefully avoided a similar evil, and thus have escaped its fearful consequences. A brief review of early ecclesiastical history will show that this was not exactly the result. The preceding pages afford sufficient evidence, that during the first two centuries the churches generally, although often severely persecuted, adhered to the faith of the Gospel, and realized its saving life and power. Subsequently, however, various errors and innovations crept into the church. In different places and by various means, opinions and practices, rites and ceremonies, were brought into operation, which were not only not taught in holy Scripture, but which were opposed to the spirit and letter of its teaching. We will not here repeat what has been said respecting celibacy, demonolatry, sacramental efficacy, or priestly domination; but, whatever difference of opinion may exist respecting parts of the evidence adduced, we think it must be admitted that the doctrines which were taught, and the institutions which were general in the sixth century, cannot be supported by the letter of sacred writ. This appears in our judgment to stand out in the Christian history of this period as a clear and incontestable fact.

It must also be remarked, in respect of these points, that

while they do not appear at first sight to impugn or oppose any grand scriptural doctrine, yet, when brought into united and vigorous operation, they completely alter the entire character of Christianity. Our limits forbid any lengthened illustration; but we cannot avoid (even at the hazard of tedious repetition) testifying, in the fear of God, to the simplicity, purity, and spirituality of the Christian faith. Do the Scriptures enjoin celibacy? Do they not proclaim the pure and honourable character of marriage, and represent that holy state as illustrating the union between Christ and His church? The reverence and worship of deceased saints and martyrs is such an open and audacious part of Heathenism, that it would be an insult to Christianity and to the holy Scriptures to discuss the point. On sacramental efficacy much has been said, and much more might be added.

We now unite this whole subject to that of priestly domination; and ask, What is the great distinguishing characteristic of the Gospel dispensation? Is it not, that individual members of the church of Christ may have boldness of access to a throne of grace, enjoy fellowship with God and with His Son Jesus Christ, and be anointed by the Holy Ghost kings and priests unto God and to His Son? What is the teaching of Christ and His apostles? "I," said the Saviour, "am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing." (John xv. 5.) In precise accordance with this sentiment, the apostle Paul says, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Cor. xii. 27.) And again: "That we henceforth, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. iv. 14-16.)

May not a serious mind with good reason inquire, What is the spirit and scope of this divine teaching? Does it not evidently pre-suppose that the parties spoken of are made

partakers of a spiritual life in Christ,—a life, not animal and natural, but spiritual and divine, and which arises from living union with God by faith in His Son? Is not this the great vital truth of the Gospel of Christ? It is only on this principle that those and other similar passages of holy writ have any meaning. Believers in Christ are united to their living Head: they derive life and hope, happiness and heaven, from this union.

While this is so clearly the case with regard to pure scriptural Christianity, it is far otherwise when the sentiments just referred to are admitted. If the views which have been held respecting the efficacious power and virtue of the sacraments and ministers be true, then faith in Christ ceases to be the way of life, and the religion of the Gospel can only be obtained by human intervention,—and that, be it observed, not by teaching or exhortation, but by the performance of certain acts. Hence it has been boldly proclaimed, that men in a certain capacity and character possess a kind of inscrutable spiritual power; so that baptism from their hands insures regeneration; the eucharist, dispensed by them, necessarily gives life to the soul, and without them there can be no spiritual life. One thing is certain: the entire teaching of Scripture remains an everlasting condemnation of the absurdity and profaneness of such claims.

These assumptions, in conjunction with the other errors to which we have alluded, had obtained a being and an influence in the church of Christ prior to the mission of Augustine to our country. Yet it must be remembered, that when Augustine arrived in Britain, although those errors had been introduced into the church, they existed generally in quiet and unobtrusive moderation. Hence the accounts which remain of his mission and success exhibit his character and labours, in many respects, as those of an able and zealous Christian missionary. Still, it is important to observe, that in one particular his mission differed from all those of which we read in apostolic times. He came accredited to the court, and his first converts appear to have been those of the royal family. Now, although we are quite of opinion that kings

and queens, as well as their meanest subjects, must be converted, and become as little children, or they cannot enter into the kingdom of God ; yet it does not appear that the course which was adopted on this occasion was the best that might have been adopted to effect the great object of Christianizing the people at large, while it obviously exposed the church to dangers of a serious character.

The apostles and their coadjutors, when they went into heathen countries to preach the Gospel, delivered their evangelical message to the great mass of the people. It was not until many had been converted to God, and churches had been formed, that the Christian cause came under the notice of sovereign powers. Even then, as far as we are informed, except the ministers of Christ had to defend themselves against false accusations, they addressed the word of God to the hearts of kings and rulers, simply with a view to their salvation, and not to procure aid or patronage for the church. This may appear an unimportant matter ; yet, in all probability, it gave a character to the Anglo-Saxon church which it never lost. If a Christian society had been formed of persons in a private station, all the arrangements made for the government and extension of the body would not only have been unfettered by the interposition of authority, but would have been devised solely for its ostensible object, the real benefit of the church. But when, from the position of the missionary at court, all those measures were necessarily brought under the royal cognizance, they would certainly be in some degree fettered by principles of worldly policy.

This may probably account for the small measure of real success which resulted from the labours of Augustine, his companions, and successors, in comparison with that which attended the efforts of the pious Scots and Britons. The one party chose a most unpropitious soil : they directed their efforts to kings and courtiers. The other ministered principally to the people, and were, consequently, the instruments of rooting Christianity in most parts of England.* This connexion of the Gospel ministry with the several Saxon

* SOAMES' "Eight Sermons at the Bampton Lecture," p. 257.

governments might lead to many of those arrangements which have been noticed, by which various heathenish practices were retained and perpetuated in conjunction with Christian services. But another, and a still greater, evil evidently arose out of this circumstance, although it was at the time regarded as an advantage: the clergy acquired an inordinate amount of influence and power. Associated as they were with the several governments, they were able ultimately to establish their entire ascendancy over the more numerous bodies of people who had been converted through native agency. Thus not only was the fruit of their own labours subject to the evil tendencies above noticed, but at length the whole Christianity of the country was fully imbued with the same mischievous elements.

If we had set before us, as abstract propositions, the Gospel of Christ associated with the errors which have been specified, and placed in conjunction with the circumstances we have just related; and were called upon to state the probable result which would accrue to the church in future ages from their united operation; we might feel great difficulty in furnishing any probable answer. This, however, is not the case. In the history which has passed under our review, the solution is furnished with the perfect accuracy of incontrovertible fact. From these elements, operating under such circumstances, English popery arose.

It is not unusual to ascribe this result to the tendency of various political causes, and to the talents and ambition of particular individuals. Yet it is sufficiently evident, that, whatever auxiliary influence might have been derived from these sources, they were not the true origin of English popery. Error had found an entrance into the church, and arose into energetic operation. For a long time, neither the church nor the world appeared to be aware of the fact. There was, however, even in apostolic times, one man who distinctly perceived the first motions of this evil agent, and announced that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." But, unsubdued by the efforts of the truly pious, it continued its onward course. Augustine, Theodore, or

Dunstan, occasionally gave direction to the machine; but they were not the power from which the motion arose. It was evidently produced by the elements of unrighteousness which have been referred to, increased by the circumstances stated, which ultimately worked out the vast and profane result.

It will not be necessary here to dilate on the essential deviation from truth which characterized the religion of the church in the time of Dunstan. Many important verities might have been virtually retained, yet nothing can be more certain than that error reigned. The religion of that day was, in all its active and practical elements, a departure from the truth. It took away justification by faith, and offered in its stead baptismal regeneration. It removed Christ, as "the way, the truth, and the life;" and exhibited in His place His virgin mother and men-made saints. It concealed and buried the important doctrines of a man's personal acceptance with God, the sanctification of his nature, and the witness of the Holy Spirit; and furnished purgatorial fires in their room. It took away spiritual union with God, and the enjoyment of divine peace, love, and joy; and supplied as a substitute dead men's bones, bits of wood, iron, and brass, which were falsely supposed to have been in ancient days parts of a cross or a manger, of bolts or chains. More than all: it concealed the way of access unto God, and shut out men from a throne of grace; substituting, instead, priests who, pretending to exercise mystical or magical powers, arrogated to themselves extravagant and supernatural attributes.

But how was this entire adulteration of the truth sustained? To this it may be replied, that although holy Scripture was not prohibited, copies of the Bible were very scarce, and few had access to them. Yet even in these circumstances, the priests did not dare to rely entirely on the Bible; but following the same course of arrogant deception which the Jews had previously trodden, they pretended to possess apostolic traditions, that were to be received in explanation of the New-Testament Scriptures, and that

warranted the introduction of those assumptions, rites, and doctrines, which had been introduced into the church, and respecting which the word of God was entirely silent.* This completed the great apostasy. By this device, all means of stemming the torrent were removed; the priests had secured the key of knowledge; they held and interpreted the standard of truth; and therefore all appeal was taken away, and the intellect and spiritual destinies of the world were placed in prostration at their feet.

We are well aware, that when these evils are detailed, it is usual to be met with the answer, "But these were 'the dark ages.' " What made those ages dark? This question is worthy the attention of some highly-gifted and truly Christian mind. We have no intention of grappling with it; yet there are a few particulars arising out of this subject, which it may be necessary briefly to notice.

We know that the gradual decay and ultimate dismemberment of the Roman empire, especially when taken in connexion with the daring irruptions and victorious establishment of the furious Northmen in various countries, were calculated to have an unhappy effect on the science, literature, and general civilization of southern Europe. Yet, admitting all that can be claimed on this account, the storm had fallen on Britain prior to the mission of Augustine. This island felt the withering curse of barbarism in the establishment of the Heptarchy. But science afterward revived. Theodore ably promoted it; and England arose to celebrity. Her schools were resorted to from all parts of the Continent; and a most encouraging prospect was held out of steady and important progress.

What blasted this hope? When Alfred ascended the throne, why was learning so rare that scarcely a priest could construe his prayers? The ravages of the Danes could not have produced this, or the effect must have preceded the

* "It is manifest, that the Rabbinical and Romish churches stand exactly upon the same ground respecting the rule of faith, each professing to be the depository of an unwritten, as well as a written, word of God."—SOAMES' "Bampton Lecture," p. 28.

cause. And, what is still more remarkable, at this period the church was in all the plenitude of power. Upon what principle can this singular fact be explained? It may be freely admitted, that various political and social causes were in operation which might to some extent have retarded the progress of intellectual cultivation; but they are evidently insufficient to account for the results which so abundantly press themselves upon our attention. If Christianity be indeed, in all its doctrines and economy, a revelation of perfect truth, its direct tendency must be to raise human nature to the greatest elevation of piety and happiness. If the church of this period had been fully identified with pure Christianity, then it is certain, that when she put forth the maturity of her strength, mental and moral improvement would certainly have been among the first fruits of this success. Yet, on the contrary, we find the church rising, and the intellectual character of the people sinking. Whilst the most important ecclesiastical triumphs were being achieved, we see the skies gather blackness, the youthful energies of science paralysed, well-founded scholastic establishments smitten with a curse, and an intellectual night of dreary darkness spread over the country.

It does not at all affect the state of the question, to show that the measure of this darkness has sometimes been overstated. Allowing due weight to every objection, enough remains to make the case sufficiently strong. We are willing to attend to any rational solution of this difficulty; but until one is furnished, we must be permitted to believe, that the errors which had obtained ascendancy in the church stood intimately connected with the ignorance of the dark ages. We readily concede that the Gospel requires not only the subjection of the will, but also the submission of the intellect, to the authority of revelation. But then this is a submission to the wisdom of God, which elevates and enlightens us while we humbly bow. The church of this age, on the contrary, demanded subjection to the dogmas and decrees of men. The religion which it taught was not the subject of knowledge; its principles, efficacy, doctrines,

and claims, unscriptural as they were, were not produced for investigation, but for blind, unwavering, and entire reception. Thus was inquiry crushed in the bud. Besides, these claims to priestly power were so often supported by fraud, jugglery, and falsehood, that general and extensive cultivation of mind must have led to the discovery of the cheat, and have caused the people to turn away from the authors of it with disgust. The ecclesiastics knew this. Their influence was therefore directed, not to the best, but to the most expedient, end; and the dark ages were the result.

In taking leave of this subject, we recall attention to the important fact, which the ecclesiastical history of this period abundantly unfolds to our view, that spiritual religion declined just as the avowed interests of the church were advanced. On the one hand, we are called to contemplate priests in glittering garments, obtaining influence at the courts of kings, professing to work the most astonishing miracles, claiming to have the keys of heaven and hell, and to hold in their own hands the ministration of rites which alone could afford salvation; and even, beyond this, professing to exercise power over the spirits in the invisible world. All this is exhibited in powerful and vigorous action. The objects for which preceding prelates had laboured, which past generations had longed to see, were now accomplished. Hope was satiated, and the church stood forth prominently as the greatest power of the age. Yet, on the other hand, the simple, vital religion of Christ was almost unknown, or, if it still lived, it was not maintained by the efforts, but existed in defiance of the errors, of the church. We do not read of forgiveness of sins, of the conversion of souls, of the experience of joy and peace in the Holy Ghost. These high and holy privileges, which formed the essence of religion in apostolic times, appear then to have perished from the knowledge of man.

The framework of the church had acquired strength, the fabric had been rendered splendid by elaborate architecture, and had been ornamented by wealth and fancy; but the

living worshipper was not found. Damp, dark, deadly gloom reigned throughout the temple, and mournful echoes proclaimed that "the glory was departed." The external form of religion was adorned with the most costly attire was lifted on high, and occupied a seat above the throne of kings, whilst worldly pomp and policy bowed the knee before it; but the living soul, the spiritual intelligence, sanctified by communion with God, was gone, and, in defiance of all that art and wealth could do, loathsome putrefaction, spreading impure influences in every direction, attested that, even in the church, "sin had reigned unto death."

As we have all along endeavoured to detail the events which have been recorded, with some regard to practical use, it will not be necessary now to make any formal application. There are, however, three topics which appear to be equally important in their own character, and suitable to the present times: with these our labours shall close.

1. From what has been said of the Anglo-Saxon church, it must be evident that the spiritual life of a Christian church is something not only very different from its outward or political constitution, but likewise so separate from it, that one may appear to be flourishing while the other is languishing and dying. In these circumstances it is important to bear in mind, that the spiritual life is the chief object of Christianity. For the production, maintenance, and perfection of this vitality, the framework of the church was raised; and it is only valuable so far as it contributes to this important end. Just as a house, however costly and splendid, would only be a great absurdity, and not a dwelling, if an inhabitant could not live in it; so an ecclesiastical system, however powerful or gorgeous, does not constitute a church unless it raises, promotes, and maintains the spirit of vital Christianity. With Ignatius, then, we say, "Where Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church."

2. As the error and evil of the Anglo-Saxon church in the latter period of its existence are so manifest, no real or supposed connexion with it can benefit the modern churches of

this country; much less can the validity of any Christian ministry depend on such connexion. We protest against being supposed to intimate that any person, guided by his own opinion or ambition, is of himself at liberty to assume the sacred functions of the ministerial office. An inward and spiritual call to this important work, as well as mental qualification for its duties, appears to be indispensable. It is also requisite that this call and qualification should be allowed and recognised by the members and ministers of the church. But in whatever way this may be done, it never can be necessary to connect any person with the ministerial character of a man like Dunstan, in order to the validity of his appointment.

Yet assertions, resulting in this, have been loudly made, under the title of "apostolical succession." In what respect, we ask, were Dunstan, and many of his followers in the ministerial office, successors of the apostles? It is difficult to say. It would be thought sufficiently ridiculous to assert that Charles II. could have had no valid claim to the crown of these realms, except he had derived it from the usurper who preceded him in the government. But this is infinitely more sensible than to teach that the active agents who introduced the great apostasy into our country, and turned the fold of Christ into an Augean stable,—that those ministers of false miracles and idolatry are the medium through which alone the dispensers of holy truths and holy things can now acquire their lawful appointment. The notion is so clearly opposed to all that is rational, and pure, and spiritual, that it can only be regarded as a fragment of the delusions which the dark ages have handed down to our day.

3. From the whole scope of this relation, it is a plain deduction, that the Bible alone must be regarded as the standard of all Christian truth. The history of Christianity during the first nine centuries is, in a great measure, a history of varied and repeated attempts to adulterate the teaching of holy Scripture with the inventions and opinions of men. We have seen the fearful and fatal results to the

spiritual interests of the church. We may turn where we please ; but no solid foundation is found, except in God's revealed truth. Certainly no age of the Saxon church can be regarded as affording a platform for the erection of a pure system of religion. Some modern writers appear to think that a renovation of the ancient regimen and doctrines is more desirable than any reformation. Such notions are delusive, and are connected with serious error. The entire history of the Anglo-Saxon church, regarded in a truly scriptural aspect, teaches us, that the Bible, and the Bible alone, contains the religion of Christians. The more this subject is studied with godly simplicity of mind, the more will it be apparent, that this sentiment must be adopted, as embracing such a depth of meaning, and as leading to such an entire submission to the letter and spirit of holy Scripture, as, perhaps, not even the immortal Chillingworth contemplated in his day. Of the word of God we may safely say,—

“ Here is firm footing, here is solid rock ;
This can support us ; all is sea besides.”

There is one other subject to which we beg special attention. The corruptions of the church during the period that has passed under our review, and more especially the part which the professed ministers of the Gospel took in the origination of these corruptions, and in carrying them out into that practical operation which ultimately resulted in the ruin of everything vital in religion, have often extorted from us language respecting priests and priestly influence which may be misunderstood or misrepresented. There is the greater danger of this, because it is one of the prevalent vices of the present day to vent dissatisfaction and enmity to real religion in manifestations of ill-will and reproach toward the ministers of God's holy word. With such persons we not only have no sympathy, but rejoice to place ourselves directly at issue. There is no class of persons more endeared to our hearts, no men for whose character and office we feel a more sincere and profound respect, than we do for those who minister in holy things. Nor are we

among those who wish to fetter ministers in the present day, because those of former ages betrayed their trust. God has said by the mouth of His chosen servant, "Let the *presbyters* that rule well be counted worthy of double honour." (1 Tim. v. 17.) We cheerfully award this honour, and leave them in the exercise of the high responsibility which is connected with it. But we know full well, that such true ministers will walk in the spirit of their Master, will minister the truth in love, will seek not *ours* but *us*, and will labour night and day, loving their flock as a father doth his children, that at last they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

Nevertheless, if any still remain in the sacred office who would bring back the darkness that has passed away, rather than walk in the glorious light of the Gospel; who are labouring to revive old and oft-exploded errors, rather than to conduct their people to repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; with reference to such we leave all that has been said without any qualification.

THE RELIGION OF ANCIENT BRITAIN has presented to our view much that is truly interesting and important, but still more that calls for serious regret and deep lamentation. In turning away our minds from the subject, let us cherish a hope, that *the religion of modern Britain* may be speedily purged from all remaining error, and, being fully conformed to the teaching of God's written word, and richly imbued with the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, may produce peace and happiness on earth, and lead to eternal felicity in heaven.

INDEX.

A

- Aaron and Julius* martyred, 141
Aborigines, the, of Britain, 3—traditions respecting, 4-8—a branch of the family of Japheth, 9-12—character and circumstances of, 12
Address, Saxon, to the Virgin Mary, 402
Adrian and Theodore establish schools in Britain, 384
Ælfric, on the study of the Holy Scriptures, 394—Paschal Homily of, 396, 406
Agatha, the council of, 306
Ages, the dark, 267, 469
Agricola, Cnæus Julius, made the governor of Britain, 82—establishes Roman authority, 83—promotes the cultivation of the arts and sciences, 85-87
Adan takes charge of the Northumbrian church, 337
Alban, the proto-martyr of Britain, 141
Alchfrid, king of Northumbria, 374-376
Alcuin, the school of, 388—on the study of the Holy Scriptures, 392, 393—on purgatory, 399
Aldfrid, king, learned in the Scriptures, 347
Aldhelm, 384—some of the studies of, 385, 386—bishop of Sherborne, translated the Psalms, 390—anecdote of, 419
Alectus murders Carausius, and reigns over Britain, 183
Alesia, founded by Melcarthus, 18—taken by storm by Caius Cæsar, 18—the first place where metals were tinned and plated, 18
Alfred the Great accompanies his father to Rome, 428—on the ignorance of ecclesiastics, 430—on the irreligion of the Saxons, 431
Altar found at Colchester, dedicated to the Tyrian Hercules, 19
Amalthæa, the sibyl, 108, *note*
Ambrose, on the Lord's Supper, 301
Ambrosius Aurelianus, conduct of, towards the British church, 253
Ammonius on demons, 282
Anatolius, 364
Anchorite, sage advice of an, 324
Andate, a temple dedicated to, at Maldon, 112
Angels, the existence of, known in ancient times, 36—corrupted tradition of, among the Anglo-Saxons, 214
Angles, origin and primitive location of the, 180, and *note*
Anglesea, conquest of the Isle of, by Suetonius Paulinus, 81
Anglo-Saxon church, the. See *Church, the Anglo-Saxon*
Anthony, the father of Monachism, 243
Antioch, the council held at, 161
Apollo, temples dedicated to, at Westminster, Bath, and in Cornwall, 112
Apostolical Succession, in what sense contrary to Scripture and reason, 472
Apuleius on demons, 282
Arianism, origin of, 159—progress of, 161—in Britain, 163—general view of, 456
Ariminum, the council of, 162
Aristobulus, reported to be the first bishop of Britain, 130
Arius, the founder of Arianism, 158—expelled from the church, 159
Arles, the council of, 156, 157
Arthur, the victory of king, over the Saxons, 192, 254
Arts, various, introduced by the Romans into Britain, 85, 87
Ascetics, 242—disgraceful conduct of British female, 420
Asceticism, 276—Cyprian on, 277
Athanasius resists Arianism, 161
Augurs, Roman, 107—the college of, 108
Augurship, Cicero on the, 107
Augury of the Druids, 62—Saxons, 226
Augustine, sent by Gregory as a Missionary to Britain, 316—reception

of, by the king of Kent, 318—fixes his residence at Canterbury, 319—receives a *pall*, 319—confers with the Welsh bishops, 322, 324, 351—claims of, over the British Church, 322-324—ill-feeling of, towards British Christians, 325—succeeded by Laurentius, 328—mission of, 464
Augustus, policy of, towards Britain, 75
Aurelianus, Ambrosius, zeal of, in the cause of religion, 253
Auricular Confession rendered necessary by the doctrines of purgatory and penance, 409

B

Baal, or *Bel*, worshipped by the Druids, 47
Bacchus, the rites of, 95
Balaam, the case of, considered, 63
Balerium, Diodorus Siculus on the British promontory of, 20
Bangor, a temple dedicated to Minerva at, 112
Bangor and *Caerleon*, centres of the ancient British Church, 246—massacre of the monks of, 326—Icoed, destruction of the monastery of, 327
Baptism, 290-300—manner of the celebration of, in the primitive church, 290—Justin Martyr's account of, 291—appellations given to, by the early church, 294—erroneous opinions of, held by the Fathers, 295—clinical, 295, 296—preliminary steps to, 297—exorcism added to, 297—the, of ten thousand men in one day, 355
Baptismal regeneration, 298, 299
Bards, Druidic, 63
Bealtine fires, 47
Bede, the learning of, 387—piety and death of, 413-417
Belgæ, settlements of the, in Britain, 49
Bellona, a temple dedicated to, at York, 112
Benedict, the founder of a new order of monks, 244
Bergelmer, the giant, 232
Birinus introduces the Gospel to the West Saxons, 338, 339
Bishop, origin of the term, 144—of Rome. See *Rome*, *bishop of*
Bishops and *Presbyters* of the same

order, 144—elected as a remedy against schism, 146—country, 146
Blederic, duke of Cornwall, defeats the Saxons, 327
Boadicea and her daughters, and treatment of, 81, 82—the defeat of, 82
Bodmin, the reason for founding the bishopric of, 447
"Book of Llandaff," the, 119
Books, the sybilline, 108
Bor, the family of, 232
Bran, the father of Caractacus, in Rome, 128—probably converted to the Christian faith in Rome, 128—probably introduced the Gospel into Britain, 130, 135—Triads respecting it, 128
Bregwin, superstitious contest respecting the interment of, 422
Britain inhabited by different races of people, 3—the different tribes of, specified in the Triads, 4-6—the earliest settlers in, 9—Phœnician commerce with, 15—known to Greek writers, 23—colonized according to Cæsar, 25—early commercial intercourse between the continent and, 25, 26—populous in the time of Julius Cæsar, 31—invaded by Cæsar, 69-74—Roman mythology established in, 112—the Gospel preached in, before the reign of Claudius, 114—the apostle Paul in, 122—the Diocletian persecution reaches, 139—the piratical incursions of the Saxons into, 182—retirement of the Romans from, 184, 185—invaded by the Scots and Picts, 184, 185—the partition of, into *civitates*, 187—the Saxon kingdoms of, 191—Scandinavian paganism established in, 238—the ascendancy of Popery in, 447
British Church, the. See *Church*, *the British*
Britons, the, powerfully influenced by their traffic with the polished nations of Western Asia, 21—earliest traditions of, 25—cultivated condition of, at the period of the Roman invasion, 26—divided into different tribes, 26—state of society among, 27—feudal system of, 27—intellectual caste of, 27—the greatest punishment of, was to be interdicted

from the sacrifices, 28—acquainted with the useful arts before the time of Cæsar, 32—strenuously resist the Roman armies, 33, 34—primitive religion of the, 36—believed in the immortality of the soul, 39—sacrifices of, 40—times of the worship of, 41—sacred groves and places of, 41–43—rout two Roman cohorts, 73—elect a sovereign named Mark, 185—Constantine, 185—effect of the Saxon invasion on, 193, 194
Brovi, the council of, 253
Brutus, tradition of the Trojan, having led his followers into Britain, 21—curious confirmation of this by Spanish authors, 23
Buildings first erected in Britain for Christian worship, 137

C

Cædmon, the poetry of, 380–383
Caerleon and *Bangor*, centres of the ancient British Church, 246
Cæsar, Julius, the testimony of, to the astronomical and geometrical knowledge of the Druids, 29, 30—is said to have acquired considerable booty by his two descents upon Britain, 32—insatiable ambition of, 69—invasion of Britain by, 70—disaster to the galleys of, 71—the second invasion of Britain by, 71—defeats the Britons, 73—returns to Rome, 74—results of the invasion of Britain by, 74
Calcuith, council of, 425
Caligula, insane conduct of, 76
Calne, council held at, 441
“*Canon of the Mass*,” the, 307
Canons, Romish, for the English Church, 369–371
Caractacus, accession to power of, 75—defeat of, 79—taken prisoner to Rome, 80—the father of, converted to the Christian faith in Rome, 129
Carausius appointed “Count of the Seashore,” 182—revolts from Rome, and maintains his independence in Britain, 183—forms an alliance with the Saxons and Franks, 183
Cartismandua delivers Caractacus to the Romans, 79—dethroned, 81
Cassiterides, Herodotus and Strabo on the, 19

Cassius, observations of Dio, on Cæsar’s invasion of Britain, 33
Cassivelaunus, the command of the Britons given to, 73—defeat of, by Cæsar, 73—maintains an ascendancy over the kings of Britain, 75
Caste, intellectual, of the Druids, 27—nature of the Anglo-Saxon, 195–197
Ceadda, the bishop of Northumbria, piety of, 349, 350
Ceadda, the bishop of York, retires to the monastery at Lestingán, 369
Celibacy, errors respecting, brought into the church, 274–278—Chrysostom on, 276—Cyprian on, 277, 278—practical operation of, 277, 278
Ceolfrid, letter from Pope Sergius to, 387
Ceremonies, gaudy and heathenish, introduced into the Christian church, 303–306
Chad, prayer to St., 401, 402
Chapter, the Runic, 226
Charters of Ethelwolf respecting tithes, 427, 429
Chester, battle of, 326, 327
“*Christian life*,” character of a, the only doctrinal treatise extant of the early British Church, 175–177
Christianity, the, of the dark ages, 267—general character of, 271–273—serious adulteration of, at the close of the fifth century, 273
Chrysostom on celibacy, 276—demonolatry, 285
Church, the early economy and mode of government of the, 142—evangelization was the first work of the, 142—the primitive Christian, 143—formation of a Christian, 149—primitive constitution of the, changed by synods, 155—property of martyrs bestowed upon the, 158—edict to allow property to be given to the, 158—drawn away from its primitive purity, 164
Church, the *Anglo-Saxon*, 353–455—spiritual character of, in its early history, 353—small amount of real success, 357—disputes with the British Church respecting the time of keeping Easter and the clerical tonsure, 359–367—did not fully recognise Romish supremacy, 377

- the religious poetry of the, 380—388—the fathers of, encouraged learning, 384—eminent scholars of, 384—388—high estimation of the Scriptures by, 389—394—the teaching of, respecting the efficacy of the sacraments, 395—397—progress of doctrinal error in, 397—408—concealment of great and vital truths by, 411, 412—practical religion of, exemplified in the life and death of Bede, 414—418—decay of piety and learning in, 430—awful condition of, exhibited in the life and character of Dunstan, 433—444
- Church, the British*, 140—178—Alban, the protomartyr of, 141—poverty of, 157—Arianism in, 163—Pelagianism of, 165—171—confuted by Germanus and Lupus at Verulam, 167, 168—eminent Christians of, 171—175, 252—266—refuses to acknowledge Romish authority, 322—325—continued to resist the Romish church, 325, 446—firmly adhered to the letter of Scripture, 345—study of the Scriptures by the members of, 346, 347—the rites of, were more simple than those of the Romish Church, 348—piety of the ministers of, 348—350
- Church, the Romish*, 274—313—celibacy in, 274—278—invocation of saints in, 278—288—superstitious reverence for the sacraments in, 289—307—establishment of priestly despotism in, 307—313—obtains ascendancy over the Anglo-Saxon Church, 424—445—resisted by the British Church, 446
- Church buildings*, interments in, 422—adorned with images, 307, 403
- Churches*, early, were independent of each other, 149
- Churchyards*, the era of the formation of, 117, 421—interments in, 421
- Cicero* on the nature of the soul, 99
- Civitates*, Britain partitioned into Roman, 187
- Claudia*, the daughter of Caractacus, mentioned by the apostle Paul, 131—celebrated by Martial, 131, 132
- Claudius*, the invasion of Britain by, 76
- Clergy*, the, exempt from military service, 158—of the East exposed to different evils from those of the West, 308—gradual assumption of unreasonable power by, 308, 312—ignorance of the Anglo-Saxon, 430
- Clinical baptism*, 295, 296
- Cloths*, manufactory of linen, established in Britain by the Romans, 87
- Cloveshoo*, council of, 398—421
- Coifi*, speech of, a Saxon high priest, 331—333—profanes the idol temples, 334
- Colchester*, an altar found at, inscribed to the Tyrian Hercules, 19
- Colman*, bishop of Northumbria, 349, 358—367
- Colonies*, Roman, established in Britain, 87
- Columba*, life and character of, 254—261—missionary success of, 256, 257—views of episcopacy of, accorded with those of the primitive church, 260—adherence of, to the teaching of Holy Scripture, 261
- Commerce* of Britain with Gaul, 26
- Confession, auricular*, rendered necessary by the doctrines of purgatory and penance, 409
- Conflagration*, Saxon teaching respecting the final, 234, 235
- Consecration of churches* not a primitive practice, 118
- Constantine the Great* ascends the throne, 142—interferes with the internal economy of the church, 159
- Constantine*, a Christian king of Cornwall, 262
- Constantius Chlorus* evinces his love of Christianity, 142
- Cord Marchan*, the victory of the Britons over the Saxons at, 445
- Cornwall*, the principal seat of ancient British commerce, 20—the inhabitants of, more civilized in early times than other Britons, 20—maintained its independence, and retained Exeter until the reign of Athelstane, 193—early prevalence of Christianity in, 261, 262
- Corunna*, Malte Brun's conjecture respecting, 17
- Council* of presbyters, the formation of, 153
- Councils*, origin and influence of, on the church, 153, 154

Count of the Sea shore" appointed, 182

Country bishops," 148

Creation of man, according to the Scandinavian mythology, 210, 231, 233—giants, 232—the universe, 231, 232

Creed, the popular Roman, 93—the Nicene, 160

Cuthbert, bishop of Hereford, made archbishop of Canterbury, 420—superstitious contest respecting his interment, 422

Cunobelinus, the most illustrious successor of Cassivelaunus, 75

"*Curiones*," the, 109

Cyprian on baptism, 294—the water of baptism, 298—celibacy, 277, 278

Cyril, of Jerusalem, on baptism, 294—the holy chrism, 299—on the Lord's Supper, 299, 300—prayers for the dead, 303

D

Daniel, fulfilment of a prophecy of, 457

Dark Ages, Christianity of the, 267—the, arose principally from the errors and unfaithfulness of the church, 468

Daughter, baptism of the infant, of King Edwin, 331

David, archbishop of Wales, 253—character of, 253

Days of the week, origin of the names of the, 222

Dead, superstitious reverence of the, 278—the Lord's Supper sometimes given to the, 304—prayers for the, 398—worship of the, 283-287 398, 400-402

Death of the Saxon gods, 236, 237

Decalogue, the, from a Saxon MS., 404

Decemviri, the, 108

Deities, the, of the Roman mythology, 90, 91—character and attributes of, 92—inconsistent with each other, 92, 93

Deluge, curious tradition of the, preserved in the ancient British triads, 6, 7

Demons, 280-284—Hesiod on, 281, 282—Plato on, 281, 282

Demonolatry, Ammonius on, 282—Apuleius on, 282—Eusebius on, 282, 283—progress of, 283

Devotion, character of the, inculcated by the Roman religion, 105

Despotism, hierarchical, 307-313

Destruction of all things, the, according to the Scandinavian mythology, 234-237

Diana, a temple dedicated to, on the site of St. Paul's cathedral, in London, 112

Dio Cassius on Cæsar's invasion of Britain, 33

Diocletian persecution, the, 138

Diodorus Siculus on Balerium and Ictis, 20—on the tin trade of Cornwall, 24—on the rhetoric and polite arts of the Britons, 30

Dionysius on the baptismal water, 298

Dispensation of tradition, the, 460—the Gospel, 463

Divination of the Druids, the, 62

Divine Unity, doctrine of the, held by the Druids, 51—singular manner of its acknowledgment, 53

Doctrines of the Anglo-Saxon religion, the influence of the, 213

Drighthelm, Saxon homily on the vision of, 400

Druids, the, Julius Cæsar's account of, 27—were the supreme judges, 28-65—were under one chief, 28—exemptions of the, 28—statutes of, not committed to writing, 28—used Greek characters in writing, 28—extensive learning of, 29-31—religious doctrines of, 37-40—religious rites and services of, 40-42—the similarity of the religion of, to that of the patriarchs, 42, 43—appointed to be priests, 44, 45—antiquity of, 45—instructed the people, 45—supposed origin of the term, 49—regarded Hercules as the patron of eloquence, 52—venerated the oak, 53, 61—hymns of, 55, 56—worship of, 55—prayers of, 57—sacrifices of, 57, 58—bards of, 63—precepts of, 65—influence of the religion of, 65, 66—the stronghold of, in Anglesea, destroyed, 81

Dubricius, a British bishop, 252

Dunstan, 432-444—birth of, 432—ventriloquism of, 434, 441—notorious contest of, with the devil, 435

—made abbot of Glastonbury, 435
 —ambition of, 436—violence of, to King Edwy, 437—promoted to the see of Worcester, 439—appointed archbishop of Canterbury, 440—pseudo-miracles of, 441—the church in the time of, 467

E

Eadbold, conversion of King, 329
Eadlorman, remarkable speech of an, 332
Earth, a new, according to the Scandinavian mythology, 237
East Anglia, Christianity introduced into, 336
Easter, debate on the time of keeping, 359–367—the Britons refuse to conform to the Romish time of keeping, 445
Edda, the old, 206—the new, 206—character of the mythology of, 206, 207
Edict, the famous, of Leo Isaurus, 423
Edwin, the king of Northumbria, renounces idolatry, 331—the baptism of, 334—slain in battle, 336
Edwy and *Elgiva*, tragic story of, 437–439
Efficacy, baptismal, 293, 406, 407—sacramental, 406
Eleutherius, the pretended letter of Pope, to King Lucius, 121
Elfreda, the princess, devoted to perpetual virginity, 343
Elgiva, tragic story of, 437–439
Epaone, the council of, 306
Epigrams of Martial on Claudia and Pudens, 132
Epiphanius condemns some Arabian Christians for the worship of the Virgin Mary, 287
Epulones, the, 109
Error, origin and progress of, in the church, 270, 287, 313—general view of, 459
Errors, four great, of the Romish Church, prior to the time of Augustine, 313
Essenes, the, 240
Ethelbert, reception of Augustine and his company by, 318
Ethelwolf, charter of, 427, 429
Eusebius, testimony of, to the preach-

ing of the apostle Paul in Britain, 124, 125

Evangelical religion, proof of the decay of, in the church in the time of Gregory, 314

Exorcism practised in the early church, 297

Ezekiel, the prophet, on the commerce of Tyre and Sidon, 13

F

Farmen and *Owen*, version of the four Gospels by, 391

Fastidius, bishop of London, 174—fragment of a doctrinal treatise of, 175–177

Fatalism, doctrine of, not adopted by the Druids, 54—the, taught at Rome, 102

Feasts, the origin of parish, 320

Fenris, the wolf, 222, 235, 236

Festivals, the, of the Romans, 95

Fetiales, the, 109

Feudal System, the, established among the ancient Britons, 27

Firmicus, Julius, on baptism, 298

Flamines, the, 109

Fortunatus, Venantius, the testimony of, to the preaching of the apostle Paul in Britain, 126

Frigga, or *Freya*, the wife of Odin, 218

Frode, Are, and Samud Sigfusson collected the older Edda, 206

Future State, the, as believed by the Druids, 39—Romans, 98—Virgil on, 100—Saxons, 211, 217, 237

G

Gades, the great entrepôt of Phœnician traffic, 19

Gemaras, the, 461

Geoffrey of Monmouth, the work of, 21

Gerennius, the death of, 266

Germanus visits Britain, 167—refutes Pelagianism, 168—gains the Hallelujah victory, 169, 170—second visit of, to Britain, 170—visits Wales, 171—debarks from Plymouth for the Continent, 171

Germoch, an Irish king, travelled on a religious mission into Cornwall, 263

Hildas, on the introduction of Christianity into Britain, 114, 125—the history of, 247—the epistle of, to the British nation, 248–250—account of the weakness of Britain when abandoned by the Romans, 186—estimate of the religion of the Britons, 248–252

Gimle, 214, 237

Glastonbury, early Christian church at, 137—the legends of, 432, 433

God, beauty of the name, 217—doctrines of the Druids concerning, 37–39

Gods of the Anglo-Saxons, the, 217–223—death of the, 236, 237

Gospel, introduction of the, into Britain, 455

Gospels, the four, translated into the Anglo-Saxon language, 391

Greece, the early history of, involved in fable, 10

Greeks, early navigation of the, 23—commercial intercourse of the, with Britain, 24—influence of the, on Britain, 49

Gregory the Great on relics, 288—on Antichrist, 313—on forgiveness of sins, 314—anecdote of, 315—commiseration of, with the heathen Saxons, 316—becomes bishop of Rome, 316—sends Augustine to Britain, 316—letter of encouragement to Augustine from, 317

Guthlac, a Saxon anchorite, translated the Psalms, 390

H

Hallelujah victory, the, 169, 170

Havamaal, the, or sublime discourse of Odin, 207, 228—moral maxims of, 229

Healths, curious and profane instance of the drinking of, 225, *note*

Heaven, significant name of, among the Anglo-Saxons, 215, *note*

Hedda, bishop of Winchester, letter of Aldhelm to, 385, 386

Heimdal, 236, 237

Hela, the goddess, 215, 222—the abode of, or Death, 215

Hell, significant name of, among the Anglo-Saxons, 215, *note*

Hengist and *Horsa* land in Britain, 188

Hengist, the treaty of, with Vortigern, 189—atrocious policy of, 190—establishes himself in Kent, 190

Heptarchy, the establishment of the, 193—introduction of Christianity into the several kingdoms of the, 342

Hercules. See *Melcarthus*—the worship of, 47, 48—the Tyrian, altar dedicated to, found at Colchester, 19

Hertford, a council held at, 369

Hesiod on demons, 281, 282

Hesus, the worship of the Deity under the name of, by the Druids, 52

Hierarchical despotism, 307–313

Hilda, the life and piety of the Lady, 342, 343

Homer's description of the skill of the Phenicians, 14—mention of tin and lead, 15

Homilies, the Saxon, on prayers for the dead, 399

Homily, the Paschal, of Ælfric, 396, 406

Horsa lands in Britain, 188

"*Housel*," meaning of the word, 396

I

Ia, or *Hya*, an Irish lady who travelled into Cornwall, built a church at, and gave her name to, St. Ives, 263

Ictis, the, of Diodorus Siculus, 20

Idolatry introduced into the Christian church, 403, 404

Idol temples appropriated to Christian worship, 320

Images not in use among the Druids, 53—worship of, sanctioned by the Anglo-Saxon Church, 403–405—political contests arising out of the worship of, 423

Immortality of the soul, influence of the doctrine of the, on the ancient Britons, 46

Incense used at the Lord's Supper, 305

Influence of the Druidic religion on the ancient Britons, 65

Intolerance of the early Anglo-Saxon Church, 351

Invocation of saints, the, 400–402—origin of the practice of the, investigated, 278–282—progress of, in the church, 282–287—opinion of

the Anglo-Saxon Church respecting, 400-402
Invocation of the Virgin Mary, 402
Iona, the monks of, 261—piety and zeal of, 265
Isidore of Damietta on baptism, 295

J

Janus, a temple dedicated to, at Leicester, 112
Jerome advocates monasticism, 245
Joseph of Arimathea, legend respecting the preaching of, in Britain, 116
Julian of Toledo on purgatory, 398
Julius Firmicus on baptism, 298
Justin Martyr on baptism, 294—the celebration of the sacraments, 291, 292—celibacy, 276
Justus sent as a missionary into Essex, 319

K

Keby, a Cornish prince, the eminent piety of, 171
Kent, the origin of the name, 11, *note*—Christianity introduced into, 318
Kingdoms, the seven Saxon, of Britain, 191, 192
Kymry, the settlement of the, in Britain, 10
Kyneta, the, of Herodotus, inhabit the British Isles, 11
Kynigils, the king of the West Saxons, 89

L

Language, the Latin, generally known to British Christians, 346
Laurentius succeeds Augustine as archbishop of Canterbury, 328—unworthy trick of, to restore the influence of Christianity, 329—letter of, to the Scots of Ireland, 351, 352—ambition of, 351, 352
Laws, the first code of, published in the Saxon language, 328
Lead and *tin* mentioned by Homer, 15
Learning, the Anglo-Saxons remarkable for, 386, 387—inquiry into the causes of the decline of piety and, 430, 431
Lector, the, or reader, in early Christian worship, 150

Leicester, a temple dedicated to Janus at, 112

Leo Isaurus, the famous edict of, against image worship, 423

Legends, the Glastonbury, 116, 432, 433

Linen cloths, a manufactory of, established in Britain by the Romans, 87

Linus, supposed to be the son of Caractacus, mentioned by the Apostle Paul, 131

Literature cultivated among the Anglo-Saxons through the influence of Christian teachers, 383, 384—some account of the, 385-387

Llandaff, an early Christian church built at, 120, 137—the Book of, 119

Lodbrog, death song of Regner, 212

Loke, 222, 236

London, the rapid rising of, into commercial importance, 88—the see of, purchased for money by Wine, 352

Lord's Supper, (see *Supper, the Lord's*) 289-293, 301-307

Lucan, on the influence of the Scandinavian mythology, 216

Lucius, King, tradition concerning, 119—Nennius on the baptism of, 120—pretended letter of Pope Eleutherius to, 121—promotes Christianity, 135

Lupercalia, the festival of the, 95

Lupus visits Britain with Germanus to confute Pelagianism, 167

Lustrations, Roman, 97

M

Macregol transcribed the four Gospels in the Anglo-Saxon language, 391

Magi of Persia, the, in what respects similar to the Druids, 63

Magic of the Saxons, the, 226—of Odin, the, 226

Magnet, the, known to the Phenicians, 14

Maldon, a temple dedicated to Andate at, 112

Man, primitive meaning of the term, 231

Marseilles, the city of, built by the Greeks, 23

Martial, epigrams of, on Claudia, 131, 132

Martin erected the first monastery in Gaul, 243

Martyrs, The Encomium of the Egyptian, 286
Mary, Divine honour paid to the Virgin, 287—Saxon address to the Virgin, 402
Mass, canon of the, 307
Matrimonial condition of the ancient Britons, 65, *note*
Maur, Rabau, on the Study of the Scriptures, 393
Maxims of the Havamaal, 229
Maximus, Valerius, on Saxon philosophy, 216
Mediator, Thor considered as a, by the Anglo-Saxons, 220—notions of a, prevalent among ancient nations, 236, *note*
Mela, Pomponius, testimony of, to the learning of the Druids, 29, 30
Melcarthus, 15–19—the expedition of, 15—named Hercules from *Harokel*, 17—at Gades and Cape Artabri, 17—founds Alesia, 18—reaches Britain, 19—worshipped in Britain as the Tyrian Hercules, 19
Mellitus and **Justus** sent as Christian missionaries into Essex, 319—go to France, 328—return to Britain, 330
Mercia, the Gospel introduced into South, 341
Mercury, a temple dedicated to, in Cornwall, 112
Merit, the doctrine of human, introduced into the Anglo-Saxon Church, 407, 408
Metropolitans, origin of the rights of, 154
Middleton's, Dr., opinion of heathen oracles, 63
Minerva, a temple dedicated to, at Bangor, 112
Ministers, the spirituality of the British Christian, 349
Ministry, the *Christian*, 471—the different offices of, primarily derived from the Jewish synagogue, 148
Mishna, the, 461
Missionary success of Columba, 257
Mistletoe, Pliny's description of the gathering of the, 40—of the oak regarded with peculiar reverence by the Druids, 60–62—the cause of this reverence for, 60—probably typical of a promised Redeemer, 61

Monastery in Gaul, the first, 243
Monastic institutions, origin and progress of, 240–244—degeneracy of, 245
Monasticism, 244, 245
Monks of Iona, the, 261—piety and zeal of, 265
Moral doctrines of the Druids, 38, 39, 65—Romans, 103, 104—Saxons, 227–231
Morality, the, of the Roman religion essentially defective, 104
Morgan, a British monk, the author of Pelagianism, 165
Moshelim, the Asiatic, 63
Muspelsheim, 233, and *note*
Mythology, the Saxon, 201–239—Roman, 85–111—Scandinavian, 206

N

Nastrande, 216, 237
Nazianzen, Gregory, on baptism, 294—advocates monasticism, 245
Nennius, his account of the baptism of King Lucius, 120
Nesterfield, the council of, 375
Nice, the council of, 159
Nicene Creed, the origin of the, 160, *note*
Nifleheim, 215
Ninian, usefulness of, as a Christian missionary, 173
Northumbria, Christianity introduced into the Saxon kingdom of, 331—interesting debate concerning the establishment of Christianity in, 332–335

O

Oak, the, venerated by the Druids, 53
Odin, several persons of the name of, 201–204—the principal deity of the Anglo-Saxons, 202–217—the God of War, 209—the magic of 226
Odo, the primate, 436–440—divorces Edwy and Elgiva, 438—sanctions the revolt of the Northumbrians and Mercians, 439
Offa, king of Mercia, 424–427
Offices, the different, of the Christians primarily derived from the Jewish synagogue, 148

Oymius, the name under which Hercules or Melicartus was revered, 45
Oracles of the heathen, the probable origin of the, 62
Origen on purgatory, 397
Ostorius Scapula, the general of the Roman armies in Britain, 78
Oswy, the decision of King, on the claims of the bishop of Rome over the English Church, 366
Owen and Farnen, version of the four Gospels by, 391

P

Paganism, established in Britain, 238
Parish feasts, the origin of, 320
Paschal Homily of Ælfric, 396, 406
Paternus, an eminent British Christian, 254
Patriarchs, principles of the religion of the, preserved and disseminated, especially by the families of Shem and Japheth, 85, 86—introduced into Britain, 87—the office of the, 155—prince of, or pope, 155—appointment of, 155
Patrick, the apostle of Ireland, the life and labours of, 178, 174—introduced monasticism into Ireland, 244
Paul, the apostle, the probability that, preached in Britain examined, 122—126—various testimonies concerning it, 124, 125—in Spain, 123—Rome, 127
Paul, the hermit, 241
Paulinus, labours of, in Northumbria, 331, 342—constant employment of, 335
Paulinus, Suetonius, appointed the commander of the Roman armies in Britain, 81—subdues the Isle of Anglesca, 81
Pelagius, a British monk named Morgan in the British language, 165
Pelagianism, the origin of, 165—progress of, 165, 168—taught in Britain by Agricola, 166—confuted by Germauns and Lupus, 167—general view of, 456
Pemance, absurd and wicked notions of, entertained by the Anglo-Saxon Church, 410—the law of, 410
Penances, the, generally imposed, 403—410
Penda, the wars of King, 339—341
"Penitential," the, of Theodore, 409
Persecution, the Diocletian, 138
Persians, instances of accordance between the religion of the, and of the Saxons, 216, *note*, 221—223
Peter, the supposition that the apostle, came to Britain, 115, 116—did not preach in Britain, 116
Peter-pence, the origin of, 427
Petrock, the piety and life of, 261—262
Phenician pilot, a, wilfully stranded his ship, when followed by a Roman vessel, 19
Phenicians, the, country of, 12—antiquity of, 13—navigation and commerce of, 13, 20—circumnavigate Africa, 13—Homer's description of the skill of, 14—the period of the intercourse of, with the Britons, 15—19—nature of the commerce of, with the Britons, 20—effects of the commerce of the, on the Britons, 21
Picts and Scots, the three great incursions of the, 186, 457
Pilot, a Phenician, wilfully stranded his ship when followed by a Roman vessel, 19
Piran, an eminent Christian, 264
Plato on demons, 281, 282—sacrifices, 450
Plautius, Aulus, reaches Britain with a large Roman army, 77—the wife of, a Christian, 137
Poetry, early consecration of, to the Divine worship, 55—specimen of Druidic, translated, 56—of the Anglo-Saxons, 379—Christian, 380—383—of Cædmon, 331, 382—of Taliessin, 446
Polytheism of Rome, the, 89—93—extended into Britain, 111
Pontifices, the, 106
Poor, the ignorance and degraded condition of the, in ancient times, 31
Pope, the, or prince of patriarchs, 155—the power of, 357, 358—raised to temporal sovereignty, 424—remarkable fulfilment of prophecy in, 424, *note*
Prayers, the, of early Christian worship, 152—for the dead, 395

Precepts of the Druids, 65—Havamaal, 228–230
Presbyter, origin and meaning of the term, 144
Presbyters and bishops synonymous, 144—the, ordained ministers, in the primitive church, 148—origin of the council of, 153
Priesthood, the Roman heathen, 106
Priests, the first appointment of, 44—power of the Druidic, 66—the Anglo-Saxon, 223
Proclus of Constantinople paid Divine honours to the Virgin Mary, 287
Prophecy of Daniel, fulfilment of a, 444, 457
Providence, Druidical doctrine of, 54—unsatisfactory doctrines of the Romans respecting, 102—belief of the Saxons in an overruling, 209
Psalms sung in Divine worship, 150
Pudens, the husband of Claudia, mentioned by the apostle Paul, 131—unusual epithet of “sancto” applied to, by Martial, 133
Purgatory, opinions of the Anglo-Saxon church respecting, 397—Julian of Toledo on, 398—Origen on, 397
Pythagoras on sacrifices, 450
Pytheas sent from Marseilles to make discoveries in the Atlantic Ocean, 24

R

Raban Maur on the study of the Scriptures, 393
Reader, the, or Lector, of early Christian worship, 150
Redeemer, sentiments of the Druids respecting a, 61—general expectation of a, among ancient nations, 61
Regeneration, baptismal, 298, 299
Regner Lodbrog, the dying Ode of, 212
Relics supposed to be endowed with mysterious power, 285, 306—superstitious veneration for, 286—Gregory I. on, 288—sent to the Empress Constantina and to Queen Theodelinda, 288—adoration of, 403
Religion, the decay of, in the ancient church, caused by error and superstition, 306, 307—must be founded upon the revealed truth of God, 448
Retribution, the future, of the Scandinavian mythology, 211

Rites, the sacred, of the Romans, 94, 95
Ritual of Roman worship, the, 105
Rochester, a bishopric established at, 328
Romans, the, invade Britain, 33, 69—establish their government in Britain, 83—introduce the arts of civilized life into Britain, 85—establish colonies in Britain, 86—the religion of the, 89, 453—the sacred rites of the, 94—the festivals of the, 95—the sacrifices of the, 96—character of the religion of the, described in the Scriptures, 111—abandon Britain, 185, 186
Romanus, Clemens, the testimony of, to the preaching of the apostle Paul in Britain, 123
Rome, the early history of, involved in fable, 10—the apostle Paul at, 127—the bishop of, the claims of, not acknowledged by the early Christians, 157—arrogant pretensions of, 351—debate on the claims of, 361—the power of, 357, 358—attains to great political importance, 424—remarkable fulfilment of prophecy in, 424, *note*
Romish Church, the. See *Church*, the *Romish*

Runes were the sacred letters of the Scandinavians, 204, 205—the term applied to magical inscriptions, 205—or Runic letters, the Scandinavian mythology preserved in, 204—three classes of, 205—forbidden in Spain, 205

Runic Chapter, the, 226

S

Sabbath, the, known to the aborigines of Britain, 36
Sabianism, some elements of, found in the religion of the Saxons, 222
Sacraments, the, true character of, 289–291—Justin Martyr on the celebration of, 291—corruption of, 293—progressive influence of error respecting, 293–307—superstitious notions of the efficacy of, 298, 304—prevalence of these in the Anglo-Saxon Church, 406
Sacrifices, the antiquity of, 57—the object of, 57—of the Druids, 58—

- the, of human beings not common among them, 58—views of the Roman religion respecting, 96—human, of the Romans, 96—Anglo-Saxon doctrines of, 225—human, of the Anglo-Saxons, 225—origin of animal, inexplicable except on the supposition of the Divine appointment of, 450—Plato on, 450—Pythagoras on, 450
- St. Ives*, Cornwall, the origin of, 264—remarkable for missionary zeal, 264
- Saints*, the worship of, 283, 285—Theodoret on, 283—Chrysostom on, 284—invocation of, 400–402
- Sampson*, the elder, an eminent Christian, 254—younger, 254
- Sardica*, the council of, 161
- Saxons*, the conquest of Britain by the, 179–183, 188–192—origin and progress of the maritime warfare of, 181—atrocious policy, 190—characteristics of, 194—three distinct castes of, 195–197—usages of, 198—ascendancy of the, 199, 200—instructed by the Scandinavians in the mysteries of their religion, 206—influence of the religion of, 227
- Scandinavians*, the, the mythology of, preserved in Runic letters, 204—degeneracy of the religious system of, 208—the views of the Divine Being held by, 208—inferior deities of, 209—held the doctrine of providence, 209, 210
- Scapula*, Ostorius, the governor of Britain, 78
- Schools*, sciences taught in the Anglo-Saxon, 385–387
- Scots and Picts*, the three great invasions of Britain by the, 185, 457.
- Scriptures*, the sacred, the extent to which they were possessed by the Anglo-Saxon Church, 390–393—the circulation of, in Britain, 189—held as the standard of faith, 392–394—study of, enforced, 392–394—mutilated to give warrant to image worship, 404, 405
- Seneca*, loan to an ancient British chief by, 32—observation of, on immortality, 100
- Sergius*, letter to Ceolfrid from Pope, 387
- Sermon*, the, in early Christian worship, 151—preached by a clergyman or layman, 151
- Serpent*, the great, of Scandinavian mythology, 222, 223, 236
- Sherlock*, the opinion of Bishop, on heathen oracles, 62
- Sibylline Books*, the, 108, *note*
- Sidon*, the extensive commerce of, 13
- Sigebert*, King, establishes Christianity in East Anglia, 336
- Sigfudson*, *Samud*, and *Are Frode*, collected the older Edda, 206
- Sinnin*, an Irish abbot, who travelled into Cornwall and gave his name to one of its parishes, 263
- Socrates* on the immortality of the soul, 99
- Sophocles* on life, 101
- Sophronius*, the testimony of, to the preaching of the apostle Paul in Britain, 126
- Soul*, immortality of the, taught by the Druids, 29—Saxons, 210—opinions of the Romans respecting, 98—Socrates on, 99—observation of Seneca on, 100
- Speech*, remarkable, of Coifi, a Saxon high priest, 331—of a Saxon thane, 332
- Spring-tides*, the Romans ignorant of the, at the time of Cæsar's invasion of Britain, 70
- Stillingfleet*, Bishop, on the apostle Paul in Britain, 127
- Stroneshalh*, the celebrated monastery of, 343
- Stylites*, Simon, 164
- Succession*, apostolical, contrary to Scripture and reason, 472
- Suetonius*, *Paulinus*, appointed the general of the Roman forces in Britain, 81
- Superstition*, an atrocious instance of Roman, 59, *note*—in the ancient church, 305, *note*
- Supper*, the *Lord's*, 289–293, 301–307—Justin Martyr's account of the early celebration of, 291, 292—changes which took place in the third century respecting, 292, 293—progress of error respecting, 300, 303—Irenæus on, 300—Ambrose on, 301—Chrysostom on, 301, 302—Clemens Alexandrinus on the ceremony of, 304—mode of administration of, 304—sometimes given to

the dead, 304—ceremonies connected with the, 305—the efficacy of, 306, 407
Sussex, Christianity introduced into, by Wilfrid, 373
Swale, the river, consecrated for baptism, 355
Synod in Gaul, 166
Synods or Councils, the origin of, 153, 154—effect of, on the church, 312
System, the feudal, established among the ancient Britons, 27

T

Taliessin, a British bard, 22—Troy frequently mentioned by, 22—a stanza of, 446
Temples, Anglo-Saxon, 223—Roman, in Britain, 112
Ten thousand men baptized in a single day, 355
Tertullian, the testimony of, to the apostle Paul's having preached in Britain, 124—on celibacy, 274–276,—baptismal regeneration, 299—oblations for the dead, 303
Teutates, a name under which the Deity was worshipped by the Druids, 53
Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, 368–375—and Adrian established schools in Britain, 384—the “Penitential” of, 409
Theodore, a Christian king of Cornwall, 262
Theodoret, on the journey of the apostle Paul into Spain, 123—the testimony of, on the preaching of the apostle Paul in Britain, 124—on demonolatry, 283
Thor, greatly revered in Britain, 219—regarded as a mediator between God and man by the Saxons, 220—the magic mace and girdle of, 220—dies while destroying the great serpent, 236, and *note*
Tiberius, the policy of, towards Britain, 75
Time, Saxon doctrines respecting the end of, and the final conflagration, 234
Tin procured from the Cassiterides according to Herodotus, 15—of Britain highly celebrated in ancient times, 20—of Cornwall spoken of by Diodorus Siculus, 24

Tin and lead mentioned by Homer, 15
Tithes, in the Christian church of the fourth century, 425—introduced into England, 425—charters respecting, 427, 429
Togodumnus, the brother of Caractacus, slain, 77
Tonsure, dispute respecting the, 360—of the apostle Peter, 360—the British Church refuse conformity to the Romish, 445
Traditions properly pertained to the first dispensation, 452, 460—irreligiously adopted and exalted into a standard of faith by the Jews, 461—the same unholy course adopted by the Romish Church, 467, 468—early, of Scandinavia, 231–237—Druidic, 450
Transubstantiation not a doctrine of the Anglo-Saxon Church, 395, 397—Cyril of Jerusalem on, 300, 301—Ambrose on, 301—Gaudentius on, 301—Chrysostom on, 301, 302
Triads, remarkable ancient British, on the first inhabitants of Britain, 4–7—testimony to the authenticity of the, 4, *note*—on the Deity, 38, 39—moral good and evil, 40—the introduction of the Gospel into Britain, 128, 129
Trojans, tradition respecting the occupation of Britain by the, 21
Troy often mentioned by Taliessin, 22
Truth, origin of the measure of, found in the Roman mythology, 103
Turner's, Sharon, opinion of the Welsh Triads, 4, *note*
Tyre and Sidon, the extensive commerce of, described by the prophet Ezekiel, 13

V

Valhalla, 211
Venantius Fortunatus, the testimony of, to the preaching of the apostle Paul in Britain, 126
Venus, the rites of, 95
Verulam, conference at, between the Pelagians, and Germanus, and Lupus, 167, 168
Vespasian, the military services of, in Britain, 78—on being made emperor of Rome sends Cnæus Julius Agricola to Britain, 82

Vestal Virgins, the, 110
Victoria, a council held at, 258
Vingolf, 217
Virgil on the future state of man, 100
Virgin Mary, blasphemous titles and worship offered to the, 387—Saxon invocation of the, 402
Vision of Drighthelm, 400—of Laurentius, 329
Volspa, the, or the Prophecy of Vola, 207
Fortigern, 188, 191
Vertimer, the commander of the Britons, 189

W

Wear, a nunnery founded on the bank of the river, 342
Wesses, Christianity introduced into, 356
West Saxons, Christianity preached to the, 339
Whitby, the synod at, 360—Abbey, the origin of, 343
Wilfrid, 360—377—made bishop of York, 360—the effective advocacy of Romish customs by, 361—367—goes to Rome, 372, 376—persever-

ing efforts of, to secure extravagant honours and emolument, 373—378—made bishop of Hexham, 374
Winchester, a council held at, 427, 441
Wine purchased the see of London, 352
Witena-gemot called in Northumbria, to discuss the adoption of Christianity, 331
Woden, (see *Odin*.) 201, 217
Woollen cloths, a manufactory of, established in Britain by the Romans, 87
Worship, Druidic, 55—the ritual of Roman, 105—of the primitive Christian church, 150, 152—Divine, in private dwellings, 136
Wulfhere, the king of the Mercians, sold the see of London to Wine, 358

Y

Ymer, the giant, 232
York, a temple at, dedicated to Bellona, 112—a school established at, by Wilfrid, 384
Yule, Yole, or Ynule, 221

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